SAT. SPECIAL / D1
Helen Mirren's 2 award-winning Elizabeths compared

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Magada, Miñoza bound Philippine Open leaders

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Police question Blair second time over 'cash-for-honors' probe

BUSINESS / B1
BSP clears $600-M loan from China for Northrail, Customs inspection project

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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Image problem? Have no fear, Boy Abunda's here

By Cinc. Casaungan Jr.

Macho nature blamed for Ebdane's short fuse

By Dona Z. Pazolagan and Nikko Dizon

48 bolt N. Cotabato jail

UN report says global warming unstoppable

HOLE IN THE WALL. The eagle-like hole made by a grenade launcher on the perimeter wall behind the one-story provincial jail in Kidapawan City. All inmates escaped added by about 60 heavily armed men suspected to be MILF rebels before dawn on Friday. They did it in 15 minutes.

Bombing suspects sprung by armed men

By Inquirer Mindanao

KIDAPAWAN CITY—IT was a raid the authorities had been warned about days earlier. Still, when it happened, it took unexpected Moro lunarganas only 15 minutes to spring 48 inmates—including three alleged bombers—from the North Cotabato provincial jail.

DOJ upgrades case vs Leviste to murder

Prosecutor cites cruelty, treachery, premeditation

By Leila B. Salaverria

Loren's Senate run may end protest case vs Noli

By TJ Burgonio and Cynthia D. Balana

ONE OF MP3'S WORST ACCIDENTS In recent years, a tanker truck carrying carbon dioxide gas along a highway in Tiglion, Zamboanga del Sur, exploded as a passenger bus was coming. The bus is a total wreck.

Zambo gas blast kills dozens

By Herman P dela Cruz and John S. Alipala
Inquirer Mindanao

Families of achieving students use 5 strategies, study shows

By Queena N. Lee-Chua

SPECIAL REPORT

THE ALCUAZENS, mother Liberty and son Francis

Second FRONTPAGE

PCSO
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WEATHER FORECAST

Police identify bomb signature

By Alexis Pajo

POLICE ANALYSIS OF THE BOMB COMPONENTS recovered from a raid on a suspected terrorist safe house in Taytay, Rizal last Thursday revealed that the bomb was intended to injure large gatherings of people, officials said yesterday.

Sr. Supt. Asher Tribiso, head of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) in the National Capital Region, said police have identified the "signature" in the bomb components they recovered.

Bomb makers tend to leave in the timer the story of putting a bomb together called a "signature." Identification of the signature helps in tracing the bomb maker.

According to Tribiso, the discovery of nails among the bomb components meant that the bomb makers were targeting civilians, not buildings and structures.

He was certain the improvised explosive device (IED) was intended for use in a gathering with a lot of people.

"The nails have maximum effect with a lot of injuries and deaths," Tribiso said.

"If it was for buildings and structures, there would have been a high explosive content. IEDs with high explosive like nails are for maximum injuries," he emphasized.

The police official said the signature was similar to the components recovered from the Taytay raid last December and before, in past bombing incidents whether did not materialize.

Police believed, however, that the three suspects arrested in the Taytay raid, identified as Imadali and Jakaseria Unos and Almuddin Abdullah, could end up being released because of the absence of an antiterrorism law in the country.

Police were only able to file a case of illegal possession of firearms and explosives, a bailable offense, against the three subs. police allege, are known members of the special operations group of the secessionist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF-SOG).

"In other countries, any connection to terrorism or to the police can lead to support can make them liable under their terrorism laws. So, before there should be no ambivalence with regards to deal specifically with these people," Tribiso said.

If the suspects do get out, Tribiso said the police would just learn to subject them to surveillance.

"That's part of our job. That's the risk we have to take. We might not be able to do all the time," he said.

He also asserted there was a "big possibility" that Unos and his group could be hired by political rivals to wreak havoc on their opponents in the coming May elections.

Police are still hunting down the three to five other members of the group who escaped during the police raid on the suspected safe house on the Laguna-Lake island on Thursday.

"Our information is that they have high-powered firearms. We are concerned about what they can do with those guns in Metro Manila," Tribiso said.

Tribiso also reacted to a statement from MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu denying that Unos and his men were MILF members. Kabalu said the separatist group has no units in Metro Manila. With reports from Jerome Aning

FIRST GENTLEMAN Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo (center) signs a waiver allowing officials of the Hypo Vereinsbank in Munich, Germany to reveal his alleged accounts to members of the House committee on ways and means (from left) Reps. Antonio Cuenco and Rep. Roberto Cajes. The Philippine Consul in Bonn, Germany, Edgar Avellana, (third from right) and bank officers. At rear (1 signature). The First Gentleman was accompanied by his lawyers Jesus Jurado (second from right) and Rex Alfonso Bandong.

Mike A flies to Germany, signs waiver

By Michael Lim Ubac

FIRST GENTLEMAN JOSE MIGUEL ARROYO has signed a waiver in Munich allowing German banking authorities to disclose if he or new members of the First Family has deposits at Hypovereinsbank Bank as claimed by House Deputy Minority Leader Alan Peter Cayetano.

The Senator yesterday said he talked to the First Gentleman over the phone and he confirmed that he signed the waiver.

But pro-administration Reps. Ronaldo Zamora (of Antipolo) and Rosemary Mercadenas of Lanao del Sur condemned what the Arroyo aides joined a three-man congressional factfinding team to Munich which left Monday, had leaked signed such a sealed document.

Mr. Arroyo personally the waiver to bank officials, "so they could freely discuss details of any and all bank accounts which he and Arroyo family members may possess in the German bank branch in Munich," said Mercadenas.

Mercadenas is a member of the House ethics committee which is hearing the complaint lodged by the First Family in September 2006 to expel Cayetano from the House of Representatives for "flagrantly habitual" incongruities made his original sworn Declaration Statement of Assets and Liabilities.

The Senator claimed that by signing the waiver, Mr. Arroyo allowed everyone—from Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's mother-in-law Mrs. Cristeta Pangilinan to Mrs. Arroyo's brother Diosdado Macapagal—to look into their bank accounts.

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FIVE of the 24 Filipino hostages are guarded by Nigerian captors at an undisclosed location at the Niger Delta on Wednesday. AFP/JOHN ARIDEGBE

DFA finds Nigeria photos disturbing

By Nikko Dizon

THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS was clearly disturbed by the first-ever media photos of the Filipino seafarers held hostage in Nigeria since Jan. 20 as ongoing negotiations passed its second week.

The chilling photos that saw print in Manila on Friday, which showed five of the 24 Filipino captives guarded by armed and hooded gunmen, highlighted the 33-day-old crisis that has yet to see a breakthrough in negotiations for their release.

The photos came just a day before a Nigerian oil worker abducted Tuesday broke an oil facility in troubled southern Nigeria was found dead. There has been a dramatic upsurge in violence mixed in separatist groups or armed gangs in southern Nigeria's oil-producing Niger Delta since the start of 2006.

The Filipino hostages were seized aboard the Nigerian-flagged, German-owned cargo ship Bana Liner 3 off the coast of the West African state by gunmen allegedly belonging to the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta.

In a press briefing, DFA officials rejected the five men's overbearing crowd with Nigerian government negotiators and reiterated their optimism about the Filipinos' well-being and eventual release.

But Esteban Conejos, DFA Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs, said the publication put in question on the motives of the abductors in apparently allowing photos to be taken of their Filipino captives and having them circulated worldwide. The published photos were sourced from Reuters.

Earlier in the day, a call by Nigeria Charge d'Affaires Ezeh Andrew Chidi Dike was summoned by the DFA to a meeting with Conejos. DFA spokesperson Lilybeth Lagumbay said the meeting was called to express deep consternation between the Philippines and Nigeria on the hostage crisis.

On Thursday, the DFA admitted that negotiators were having difficulties with the abductors' "political demands."

The rebels are reportedly demanding the release of two prisoners held by the Nigerian government on charges of treason.

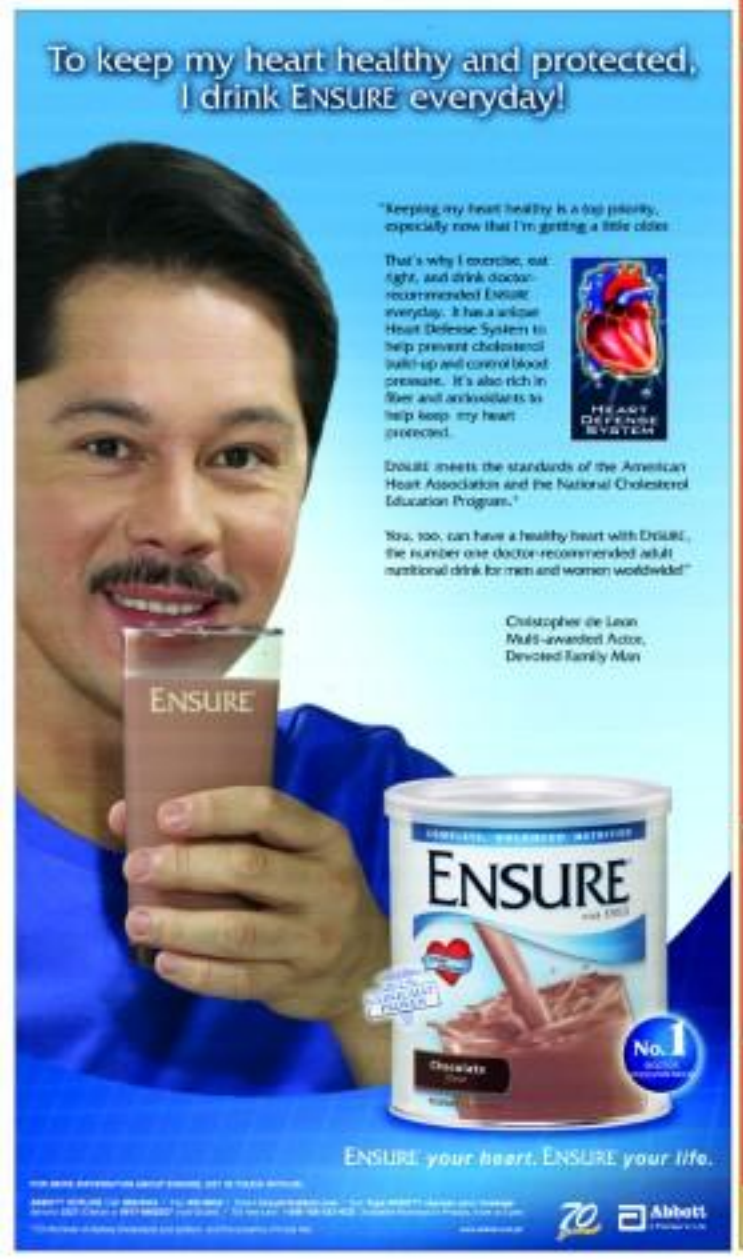
Conejos reported that based on updates from the country's ambassador to Nigeria, Mauntongo Gimpu, "talks (with the abductors) are ongoing as we speak, but you would agree with me that I cannot disclose the details because of the nature of these talks."

The official clarified that the Philippine Embassy was "not directly involved" in the negotiations, which has been between the Nigerian government and the abductors in Ekiti, Niger Delta.

The shipping company employing the Filipinos was also not involved in the talks, Conejos added.

Six out of 24 embassy personnel led by Gimpu, have stationed themselves in Ekiti to "be there to monitor the talks and play the role of coordinator," he said.

With AFP



Atong says gov't stands to gain a lot from plea bargain

By Norman Bordadora

THE GOVERNMENT STANDS TO gain much more from the plea bargain that senior prosecutors concluded with him, Charlie "Atong" Ang told the Sandiganbayan anti-graft court.

Apart from the savings in time and resources that it would take to prove Ang's guilt, the government stands to gain a billion in some of the cases it is prosecuting and 395 million in accumulated funds, Ang's lawyers argued in a memorandum to the court in support of the deal.

Ang, a consultant in the plunder case against deposed President Joseph Estrada, negotiated a plea bargain with state prosecutors that would have him plead guilty to lesser offense of corrupting a public official, which is punishable by a maximum of six years in prison.

If convicted of plunder, Ang would have to spend the rest of his life in prison.

In exchange, Ang will notify the government cases of which he has personal knowledge and pay 395 million as reparation. The amount represents what prosecutors said he took from the P130 million in tobacco excise taxes that were allegedly diverted by Estrada.

His lawyers said Ang was willing to testify for the government despite the implications that it has for his safety and that of his family.

"The lot is willing to do more if he and his family would forever suffer the fear of reprisal," lawyers Alfredo Villamar and Ruth Castelo said.

Ang's lawyers described the plea bargain with the prosecution as "unprecedented."

Ang's testimony may just prove to be invaluable and significant in the successful prosecution of the cases, they said.

To pay the 395 million, the lawyers said they was offering his Corinthian Gardens family home that he and his family occupied for many years and which he acquired long before he became a buddy of the disgraced ex-President, the lawyers said.

The lawyers disagreed with the handpicked justice who questioned the plea bargain, saying that Ang's unconfessing to plead guilty to the stronger crime, that is, of corrupting a public official which they said was even not included in the charges. The justices said that Ang did not give formula the bribe but merely delivered the P1.08 million. They suggested Ang plead guilty instead for being an accessory to plunder.

The defense lawyers argued that in order to determine whether or not the lesser offense, bribery, to which Ang proposes to plead guilty was within the crime charged, it would have to be established on the basis of the charges contained in the information.

Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio, who signed the plea bargain, argued for the government, and it was already categorical on the part of Ang to give the facts the basis even it was not his own.

"It's even worse because it's the people's money," Villa-Ignacio said.

REDEMPTION for Raymund Narag (at left), who is now a Fulbright scholar in the US after languishing for seven years inside the Quezon City jail. Bleak prospects for MNLF guerrilla Jamiri Isan (at right) who has spent 18 years in Muntinlupa for killing US military adviser Colonel James Rowe. The US outright opposes pardon or parole for Isan.

RP prison system a living hell

BEFORE NARAG SPENT NEARLY SEVEN years in Quezon City jail for a crime he did not commit.

Three years after he was released from his living hell he published a book about his experiences called "Freedom and Death: Inside the Jail," published in 2005, it painted a harrowing picture of a prison system more in tune with the 19th century than the modern age.

Narag, 33, was placed in solitude with hours from the University of the Philippines in 1995 which he was accused of taking part in a fraternity rumble that resulted in the death of another student. After spending almost seven years in jail, he was acquitted and released from detention in 2002.

After the horror of his situation had sunk in, Narag decided he would use his time in jail productively. He organized and taught functional literacy classes for the inmates. He came up with projects to improve the lives of the prisoners. He also enrolled in the BS Open University program.

Upon his release, Narag decided he would make his course in the field of criminal justice. He took every opportunity to speak on the plight of people behind bars. The then Supreme Court Justice Hilario Davide took him to task on the issue of prison reform. In 2005, the Supreme Court published his book.

A cultural attache at the United States Embassy who heard of Narag's story recommended him for a Fulbright scholarship. He is now in the Michigan State University working on his master's degree.

In his book, Narag laid out in graphic detail the subhuman conditions inmates were forced to endure: the stench, the overcrowding, the rodents that ran like rivers through the cells, diseases and death.

Built in the 1950s, the Quezon City jail was only supposed to house 2,000 inmates. Today it is home to more than 3,000 packed in so tight that many inmates sleep standing up.

It is a scene repeated around the country in a prison system plagued by underfunding, poorly handled and neglected by the country's economic planners.

According to Chief Superintendent Arsenio Cruz, head of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology and the largest cog in a thousand-person service, the system is next to breaking point.

"Overcrowding is our most pressing problem," he said.

Cruz's bureau, which is an unit of the interior department, runs 1,130 prisons with a total capacity of just over 21,000 cramped cells and a population at the end of 2006 of more than 60,000 inmates.

More are meeting trial while a small percentage are serving sentences for minor crimes like theft and illegal drug use.

Most of the prisoners are held in the police forces of smaller provincial towns as Cruz's bureau with just 7,000 personnel, cannot cope. Ideally, he said, the system needs another 15,000 guards and support staff.

"The situation is not ideal," said Director General Avelino Razon, deputy chief for administration of the Philippine National Police.

"This takes up a big complement of men and women from their principal duties (which) he said.

About 17,000 other inmates convicted of more serious crimes like murder, kidnapping and drug dealing are housed in slightly better facilities at the National Penitentiary compound in Muntinlupa City.

The 134 member of the Minimum Penitentiary of Principe, one of the Philippine prisoners is a signatory, gives clear guidelines on how prisoners should be treated, including bedding and food, and states: "It is not desirable to have two prisoners live still or more."

In Quezon City jail a 20 square-meter cell with a building capacity for 20 houses 180 to 200 inmates.

Really a thousand South Base inmates contributed to the overcrowding at the maximum security section of the National Penitentiary after Congress abolished the death penalty last year.

"Conditions are a lot better here," says inmate Rodolfo Fernandez.

"Back at the provincial jail there would be 100 of us in a cell built for 40. Even the guards and prisoners would be beaten up."

Fernandez was jailed for life for participating neighbors seeking work ahead of their life savings.

Still, of the 116 inmates at his new quarters, only 80 have beds while 100 use their own mats to sleep on the floor.

Delaying packed jails with a handful of staff is very difficult," Cruz said.

The seething jail facilities themselves "become a rich source for improvising deadly weapons" such as razor-sharp knives.

Cruz said the human "has no jail facility for high-risk inmates nor maintenance security cells".

The US State Department, in human rights report on the Philippines two years ago, said the country's prison conditions were "rudimentary and sometimes harsh," were "overcrowded, unsanitary, and in many cases, life threatening," and provided prisoners with an inadequate diet."

It said the "slow judicial process exacerbated the problem of overcrowding, because inmates both lost time sleeping, and others slept on their feet".

The treaty also cited "widespread corruption" among guards as well as "in-

Biazon welcomes actors as senators

By TJ Burgonio

A MORE HIGH-STYLED Senate? Why not, says Sen. Rodolfo G. Biazon.

Ideally, Biazon said, the Senate has to be represented by all sectors of society, including those basketballers, actors, actresses, bartenders, etc." Biazon said, a former Marine and Armed Forces chief, said in a briefing.

"Those differing human experiences in life need to be brought in to the crafting of proposed laws. Because we are legislating everything of interest in the life of our society. That's why we should not set impose prohibitions on anybody."

Biazon, chair of Senate defense committee, said that anybody could aspire for a seat in the Senate as long as he or she has the basic qualifications. "Anybody but anybody can come in, provided of course, they have the qualifications," he said.

Senate Richard Gomez, Eric Estrada and Cesar Montano, among others, have announced plans to run for the Senate, for they face the issue of skepticism that they lacked the competence necessary to grasp the complexities of legislation.

Gomez, Montano and Montano are reportedly running under the administration ticket.

If they win, they will be joining senior stars Gary Lagod Jr., Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr. and Jinggoy Estrada, who won in the 2004 senatorial elections.

Senate President Pro Tempore Juan Ponce Enrile, spokesperson of the United Opposition, had remarked on national TV that it would be prudent for the popular not to elect those big personalities to the Senate because because of the dismal performance of actors in the upper chamber.

But Revilla scoffed at the remark but didn't feel slighted because he knows how much he has contributed for the past three years, but admitted he could not speak yet of a "starting record in the field of crafting laws."

He said he had filed on local bills on road construction that would benefit his province of Cavite, as well as other measures seeking a ban on pornography and gender discrimination, and the lowering of the administrative fee which are the subject of debates on the floor.

What was important, Revilla pointed out, was that he had never been accused of corruption. "I have never been accused of using my position to further my personal gain," he said.

Silliman U wins CHEd best research award

SILLIMAN UNIVERSITY IN DUMAGUETE City received from the Commission on Higher Education's 35 million award for best research program.

Silliman learned 11 other regional winning entries for the first Higher Education Institutions (HEI) Research Program in the country said in a pioneering study on marine protected areas, it was announced at awarding ceremonies held at the Philippine International Convention Center.

University of the Philippines Diliman placed second in the national awards for its entry "Application of Nuclear Techniques to Address Specified Red Tide."

Mariano Marcos State University placed third for its entry "Integrated Bamboo R&D Program of the Ilocos Region." The second and third placers received P600,000 and P300,000, respectively.

In his opening remarks, CHED Chairman Dr. Carlos Primo emphasized the crucial role of research in national development. All 12 research finalists were winners in a regional search.

Then "Marine Laboratory Program on Marine Protected Areas" details were three decades of research and extension work by the Silliman University Marine Laboratory of Environment and Marine Sciences (SUMS), on fishery enhancement and biodiversity conservation in the Visayas and Mindanao. It has led to the establishment of some 29 marine protected areas (MPAs) and provided assistance to 42 other areas, said Dr. Angel Alcala, SU Research Director and former Silliman President and Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

"This award is a result of consistent, quality research being undertaken by SU focusing on one critical component of our people's vibrant opinion, and this is our islands and their resources," Silliman President Dr. Ben Malayang III said.

MPA Program Leader and SU BMS Director Dr. Hilconida Calumpong said they would use the monetary award to expand their research and further promote the management of the country's coastal resources.

The national winners were determined by the five member 2006 National Evaluation Committee headed by DC Emil Javier, Private Sector Chair of the National Academy of Science and Technology and National Chair, ACCESS. The other members included Dr. Jesse-Jose Fernando Jr., CHED Commissioners, Dr. Filomeno S. Ortaiz Jr., Academician, National Academy of Science and Technology; Dr. Purificacion de la Rosa, Undersecretary for Science and Technology Service of the Department of Science and Technology; and Dr. Mario Gastiche Jr., Metro Finance Manager, DBSM Jr. (SAE).

Correction

IN THE THE 2 ISSUE, a front page story—"Khaki held office with Libran in Makati"—misstated. The year Rasul Yousef allegedly planned to kill then Pope John Paul II. Yousef planned to kill the Pope in 1995... not 1982.

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Readers may send their requests for corrections to the Reader's Advocate, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 757 Ayala Avenue, Makati City. Fax them to 897-8703, 897-8704, 897-8705, 897-8706, e-mail address: readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph or text to 0917-8538704. Also, inquirer.com.ph or 897-8704 local 2000.

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Globe

DOJ upgrades case vs Leviste to murder

From page A1

Mahiri Mayor Jejomar Binay hours after the shooting and slammed such violence.

Mariael Benigno, his lawyer, yesterday decried the "indecent haste" with which the reinvestigation of the case was conducted.

Singson pointed out that the reinvestigation started on Jan. 31 at 11 a.m. and the resolution against Leviste was signed barely seven hours later.

"There is no proof whatsoever that prior to the time that Leviste shot De las Alas, there was a previous unlawful and unprovoked attack that placed Leviste's life in danger and forced him to shoot the victim," Velasco said, adding:

"The killing of De las Alas was therefore not simply a case of homicide but of murder because of the presence of several qualifying circumstances."

But Singson said: "It's quite obvious that ... prosecutor Velasco has acted with indecent haste with no mockery of our judicial system."

According to Singson, Makati Judge Elmo Alameda initially gave Velasco 15 days to reinvestigate the case but the latter asked for 30 days.

Singson said Velasco's recommendation had confirmed his earlier contention that the reinvestigation was "a charade and a farce" because its conclusion was arrived at before it even began.

He also countered Velasco's findings of murderer and conspiracy, saying that if Leviste had planned to kill De las Alas, the ex-governor would not have invited the latter to his office.

"If you planned on killing someone, would you do it in your own office?" he said.

Singson also said the finding that Leviste had not acted alone was "ridiculous."

"[The murderer] is all based on speculations, conjectures and rumors and suppositions," he said.

Elements of murder

Velasco and prosecution aide Leviste's statement that Leviste and De las Alas were arguing on Jan. 11, the day before the killing.

Pro-Gonzales' accuser, De las Alas was demanding that Leviste's influence in connection with the sale of a piece of real estate but that the two had failed to settle the issue.

The next day, Leviste supposedly asked De las Alas to meet again, and they continued arguing until the latter was shot.

As for eyewitness, Velasco said De las Alas was shot while seated and not in a fighting stance, indicating that his shooting was "cruel and unexpected."

"The manner in which De las Alas was shot in the face and head did not give him the opportunity to defend himself or pursue or even to retaliate. Such manner [was] deliberately and unconscious[ly] employed by Leviste without any danger to his person," Velasco said, adding that De las Alas need not have his back turned to the shooter to indicate treachery.

De las Alas was also killed with cruelty, as there was deliberate and conscious attempt to end the latter's life, Velasco said.

Leviste reportedly fired at least four bullets, according to Velasco.

"The panelist reminds us the fate of De las Alas were not necessary to kill him. The range and manner with which these wounds were inflicted showed deliberate intent on the part of Leviste," the prosecutor said.

With regard to the crime scene, Velasco said it was evident that De las Alas' body found slumped on a chair, was moved before police arrived.

Describing the position of the gun in De las Alas' right hand, he said the trigger finger was not inside the trigger housing and the gun was loosely held between the right thumb and forefinger.

"The gun was even undisturbed, pointed at the belly of De las Alas, as if he was about to shoot himself," Velasco said.

He said bloody smears on the chair had been caused by the rubbing of the gun's hammer against it, indicating that the gun was placed in De las Alas' hand after his death.

Velasco also said De las Alas' forefinger could not be found and pot inside the trigger housing because ejection ejector had set in.

He failed to mention how the prosecution came to know about the shooting only after more than an hour after the incident," he said.

It was also found that De las Alas was shot at close range, as shown by the gunpowder residue on the face and hand wounds and the blood on the murder of Leviste's gun, the prosecutor said.

According to Velasco, the body had five gunshot wounds—two on the face, one at the top of the head, one at the back of the head, and another on the left forearm.

Four cartridge casings were found to be from Leviste's .380 caliber. Three deformed slugs were also found, but Velasco said it could not be determined whether these were fired from the .380.

Blood on the face

Velasco also said De las Alas was found on the chair with the head leaning on the left and an exit wound below the right ear.

But the blood from the exit wound would instead stream the face, he said, adding:

"The explanation here was that De las Alas' head was previously slumped downward, explaining the gravitational path of the blood toward the center of his face."

Velasco said statements of the killing, the number of gunshot wounds and their location, and the recovered bullet slugs showed that Leviste did not act alone and had no companions.

He ordered the police and the National Bureau of Investigation to determine their identities.

Image . . .

From page A1

But even the master spin doctor was stumped when asked how President Macapagal-Arroyo should have handled the "Hello Garci" scandal wherein the country's highest official was caught on tape talking to a commission on elections (Comelec) official about how to manipulate election returns.

"Gloria humbled by not being able to give advice on this. That one really baffled me," said Miranda who has been tapped by President-in-Chief of Staff Michael Defensor to assume a key role in his run for a Senate seat in May.

Bare all

Miranda said he could not even compare the "Hello Garci" scandal to one of the incidents he masterfully handled three years ago—the shocking breakup of TV host-film superior star Cristaldino. Jove Villanueva whom the presidential daughter admitted on prime time news that she was battered, abused and stricken with STD (sexually transmitted disease) by the multi-ille-aged actor and former Sandiganbayan member.

"It's not the same situation because it [Arroyo's scandal] was not a personal thing and I could not act like a lawyer, but she was the only one involved, not the entire nation," said Miranda, who advised Arroyo to bare it all to the public.

He said he has encouraged his talents to tell the truth in any situation because the public does not prefer celebrities who claim they are "flawless."

"Wherein wars are less unbearable to announcements that normally kill us mortals like unwanted pregnancies and breakups. If they continue to do well in their career, the public will still adore them," he added.

Still, Miranda said his experience in building and saving the careers of celebrities would serve him well.

"I think politics and show biz are in the same neighborhood—both give me the creative satisfaction that I crave," he told the Inquirer in a phone interview.

He said his decision to accept clients in politics was a natural progression for him. "For all intents and purposes, I had five minutes [but] I'm almost [now] a bystander ... as the periphery. I actually have more books on politics than show business," said Miranda, who is currently reading former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's book "The Mighty and the Almighty."

He said his first brush with politics back in 1986 when he was one of the announcers tapped by Helen Benitez in her successful bid for Cavite's seat in the Batasang Pambansa.

But it was not until a few years ago that he spread his wings in the political field when he helped Gilbert Remulla top the Senatorial race in 2004.

Miranda said that his job in Defensor's campaign would be substantial but "it's very difficult to define what I'm going to do for Miko. I do everything right now as a friend. I am the image handler. I am helping him define his package."

He said that most publicists look for the highest or that most appeal that makes a topnotch candidate. But Miranda said he prefers to set people up for clients' positions to reap the "sure injuries."

If he were arrested...

In finding Leviste liable for murder, Velasco said the ex-governor's actions "violated the sanctity of the home" and "violated the dignity of the victim."

Velasco said that if it were true that De las Alas was armed, he would have engaged Leviste in a gunfight instead of just shielding his face, as shown by a gunshot wound on his left arm.

And even if De las Alas had a gun, Leviste could just have shot him to incapacitate him instead of repeatedly shooting his face and head, the prosecutor said in his resolution.

"There is no proof whatsoever that prior to the time that Leviste shot De las Alas, there was a previous unlawful and unprovoked attack that placed Leviste's life in danger and forced him to shoot the victim," Velasco said, adding:

"The killing of De las Alas was therefore not simply a case of homicide but of murder because of the presence of several qualifying circumstances."

But Singson said: "It's quite obvious that ... prosecutor Velasco has acted with indecent haste with no mockery of our judicial system."

According to Singson, Makati

Loren's Senate run may end protest case vs Noli

From page A1

at all, this would become moot since she assumes a seat in the chamber if she wins.

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Same case

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He also said that Loguria's case was no different from Joint logic.

"I don't see any difference. I don't believe she (Loguria) still has to choose which position. She's intelligent enough in a choose. Of course, she will choose the senator's post," Macalintal said.

Pilit-regard to the crime scene, Velasco said it was evident that De las Alas' body found slumped on a chair, was moved before police arrived.

Describing the position of the gun in De las Alas' right hand, he said the trigger finger was not inside the trigger housing and the gun was loosely held between the right thumb and forefinger.

"The gun was even undisturbed, pointed at the belly of De las Alas, as if he was about to shoot himself," Velasco said.

He said bloody smears on the chair had been caused by the rubbing of the gun's hammer against it, indicating that the gun was placed in De las Alas' hand after his death.

Velasco also said De las Alas' forefinger could not be found and pot inside the trigger housing because ejection ejector had set in.

He failed to mention how the prosecution came to know about the shooting only after more than an hour after the incident," he said.

It was also found that De las Alas was shot at close range, as shown by the gunpowder residue on the face and hand wounds and the blood on the murder of Leviste's gun, the prosecutor said.

Loguria said she was elated by her inclusion in the UNO-led coalition slate and indicated that she would likely run with the opposition.

"I'd like to state that I welcome and appreciate the draft and invitation of the United Opposition or UNO into their senatorial slate in the next few days. I will announce my formal decision," she said in the Senate forum.

Good fight for 3 years

"I'm independent, and I will also assist and possibly announce by next week if I'm joining a party and which party I will join. But of course, this will be in the opposition."

The former senator said she doesn't expect her protest case to be resolved before the May 14 election next year, but she wouldn't mind if this was dismissed on account of her decision to run because after all she had "fought a good fight for truth and justice."

"I had presented more than 100,000 provisions. There are 140,000 provisions in the case. I have spent over P12 million in a span of three years, and they only finished one province, Lanao del Sur," she said, referring to her claims that election returns across the country had been replaced with fake ones in the shooting that marred the 2004 polls.

"Whether or not it will be dismissed by the court on account of my possible running for the Senate, it's enough that I fought a good fight for the past three years."

Families of achieving students use 5 strategies

From page A7

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In the survey, many parents revealed that despite financial worries, they had managed to prioritize and make time for their children.

In return, most of the children often assist in household chores, and also help their family earn extra income. But studies come first.

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Encouraging learning

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For instance, Elisa Marie, the eldest, loves school and never can almost Nadzi making have issues with an al-brevet.

Simple pleasures

To make up for the constant lack of resources, Lyonsito and Elizabeth give the children all the love they can afford at home: "We build scenic as Kindle as we can with using readaloudsaving pupil-ish." The children appreciate this; Elisa can't wait to do homework.

With a simple life some simple pleasures. When she does well at the Ilo Ilo Hope de Jesus Memorial School in Pandiel, Malabon, Elisa Marie would invite parents, not toys or clothes, but a family trip to the beach or to the mall to eat.

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All in the family

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ed from Marikina Science High School as one of the top students in his batch.

He will graduate with a degree in mechanics from the Ateneo de Manila University next month. His siblings—all scholars—are in college or in high school.

His mother Liberty emphasizes that parents need to know their priorities. Family is at the top of her list.

When she was offered a terminal job, she turned it down: "Why should I teach other children when I have my own to teach?"

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Image . . .

From page A1

But even the master spin doctor was stumped when asked how President Macapagal-Arroyo should have handled the "Hello Garci" scandal wherein the country's highest official was caught on tape talking to a commission on elections (Comelec) official about how to manipulate election returns.

"Gloria humbled by not being able to give advice on this. That one really baffled me," said Miranda who has been tapped by President-in-Chief of Staff Michael Defensor to assume a key role in his run for a Senate seat in May.

Bare all

Miranda said he could not even compare the "Hello Garci" scandal to one of the incidents he masterfully handled three years ago—the shocking breakup of TV host-film superior star Cristaldino. Jove Villanueva whom the presidential daughter admitted on prime time news that she was battered, abused and stricken with STD (sexually transmitted disease) by the multi-ille-aged actor and former Sandiganbayan member.

"It's not the same situation because it [Arroyo's scandal] was not a personal thing and I could not act like a lawyer, but she was the only one involved, not the entire nation," said Miranda, who advised Arroyo to bare it all to the public.

He said he has encouraged his talents to tell the truth in any situation because the public does not prefer celebrities who claim they are "flawless."

"Wherein wars are less unbearable to announcements that normally kill us mortals like unwanted pregnancies and breakups. If they continue to do well in their career, the public will still adore them," he added.

Still, Miranda said his experience in building and saving the careers of celebrities would serve him well.

"I think politics and show biz are in the same neighborhood—both give me the creative satisfaction that I crave," he told the Inquirer in a phone interview.

He said his decision to accept clients in politics was a natural progression for him. "For all intents and purposes, I had five minutes [but] I'm almost [now] a bystander ... as the periphery. I actually have more books on politics than show business," said Miranda, who is currently reading former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's book "The Mighty and the Almighty."

He said his first brush with politics back in 1986 when he was one of the announcers tapped by Helen Benitez in her successful bid for Cavite's seat in the Batasang Pambansa.

But it was not until a few years ago that he spread his wings in the political field when he helped Gilbert Remulla top the Senatorial race in 2004.

Miranda said that his job in Defensor's campaign would be substantial but "it's very difficult to define what I'm going to do for Miko. I do everything right now as a friend. I am the image handler. I am helping him define his package."

He said that most publicists look for the highest or that most appeal that makes a topnotch candidate. But Miranda said he prefers to set people up for clients' positions to reap the "sure injuries."

If he were arrested...

In finding Leviste liable for murder, Velasco said the ex-governor's actions "violated the sanctity of the home" and "violated the dignity of the victim."

Velasco said that if it were true that De las Alas was armed, he

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help their children do well in school, thus securing for themselves a better future.

Children whose parents provide a stable learning environment at home do better in school. They are motivated and confident, and believe that they can achieve as long as they work hard.

My student Ivan Simeon, the valedictorian of Marung High School in Muñoz, no CD) who topped my math class last year, says:

"What drives me to put my best foot forward in having a purpose in life. I become a conscientious family student not so much for myself but for my family.

"I love to see the smiles on the faces of members of my family. I want to fulfill their expectations—that I become their future breadwinner.

"I want to use my capabilities to help other people. Right now, I am giving back to my classmates by becoming a mentor to other people. Aside school the duties—and I enjoy doing so."

Queena N. Lee-Chua is a professor of mathematics and psychology at the Ateneo de Manila University. A Science and Health columnist of the Inquirer, she has received several awards, including The Outstanding Young Filipinos Award, the Metrobank Outstanding Teacher Award, and the Carlos Palanca Memorial Award in Literature. She may be reached at lchua@ateneo.edu.

The survey staff will give a lecture on Feb. 10 to parents and alumni at the Ateneo and on Feb. 17 at the Marikina City Hall. Details of the study can be found in the book, "Magaling ang Pinoy! How and Why Public School Students Achieve." For copies, call the Ateneo Office of Research and Publications at 426-6001 loc 5100 to 02 or e-mail orp@admu.edu.ph.

FRIENDS and relatives gang near the coffin of Jamal Khalifa as it is flown to an airport in Antananarivo, Madagascar Thursday. The body of Khalifa — a suspect in the murder of Ms Lolita — was flown to his family home in Saudi Arabia on Thursday after an autopsy. AP

2007 nat'l budget will be transparent, says Drilon

By Cornelio D. Balmes

AUL FILIPINO CAN BOAST ARE THE GOVERNment where the taxes he pays have to spent.

Sen. Franklin Drilon said yesterday that a special provision in the recently approved P1.26 trillion budget for 2007 would allow any citizen to ask why government agencies are not releasing information on the use of public funds.

"Every government agency of the executive, legislative and judicial branches shall, upon request by any citizen, make available the data under their possession for information, in any form whatsoever, pertaining to the implementation of the appropriation under this act, including but not limited to infrastructure projects, disbursement of funds, reports, contract biddings and awards," reads a new provision which was inserted into the 2007 General Appropriations Act (GAA).

Drilon said this special provision would ensure transparency in the implementation of public funds, information on government projects and use of the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) or the so-called pork barrel allocations.

Drilon, chair of the Senate finance committee, said the clause was one of the innovative provisions facilitated in the budget measure which has been submitted for signature to the President.

"With this new provision, any citizen can now insist on his right to know. The 2007 GAA carries a special provision that mandates full disclosure of the use of public funds by each and every government agency, allowing the public careful scrutiny of government funds including the way pork barrel funds are spent," he said.

Drilon said that people's cynicism on the use of pork barrel funds was exacerbated by the fact that information on their use was not easily available to the public.

Drilon said the provision in the GAA ensured the right of the people to information on matters of public concern as enshrined in Section 7, Article III of the Constitution.

Drilon also said that different umbrella organizations of civil society groups had expressed satisfaction for the inclusion of safeguards in the use of public funds. These include the Caucus for Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO) and the Transparency and Accountability Network (TAN).

TAN is composed of 23 organizations, mostly in the academic and business sector, including the Ateneo School of Government, Concerned Women of the Philippines, La Salle Institute of Governance, Philippine Center for Policy Studies, Makati Business Club, Social Weather Stations, and Transparency International Philippines.

Khalifa body flown to Saudi Arabia

ANTANANARIVO—THE BODY OF A relative of 24 Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden shot dead in Madagascar was flown to his family home in Saudi Arabia on Thursday after an autopsy.

Jamal Khalifa — a brother-in-law of Bin Laden—was killed by gunmen on Wednesday in the historic Madagascan city.

The body would be flown to Medina in Saudi Arabia, said General Claude Ramanantsoa, commander of Madagascar's gendarmerie. A Reuters witness saw a "Saudi doctor" plane with the body on board take off from Antananarivo airport.

Israel media said on Thursday Khalifa was a close friend of Bin Laden's or was security in the third last city of faithful who arrest with Bin Laden in Afghanistan after the 2001 Soviet invasion.

Reports said Khalifa last saw Bin Laden in Sudan in 1992, and that after that was suspected of various times by FBI, Saudi and Pakistani authorities of involvement in militant activities but nothing was ever proved against him.

Ramanantsoa told Reuters by an inquiry was an obligatory formality but gave no details.

A police official from the Sakaraha district where Khalifa was killed said he had been shot in his stomach and thigh.

A second Saudi man, Qazid Abdallah, was also in the attack and escaped in an ox Taboo, the regional capital.

The Saudi foreign ministry issued a statement expressing sorrow and condemning over the of death of Khalifa, who came from a prominent Medina family.

On Wednesday, Interpol televised television station Al Arabiya, said Khalifa had been staying at a resort for visitors on the world's fourth largest island, located off the southeast coast of Africa.

Talking to the station, the victim's brother Saleh Khalifa said the killers apparently wanted to rob his brother, stating: "It's 40 gunmen broke into his brother's bedroom and shot him dead. "In cold blood." The Islamist official and about 10 cars were involved. Another police official said a complete and firehose had been stolen.

Malek denied his brother was involved in political activities, and said that apart from family ties, Jamal had no links to Bin Laden, a Saudi national who was stripped of his citizenship long before the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States.

The killing took place days after the Philippine Daily Inquirer published what it said was the last interview given by the leader of the Abu Sayyaf group before his death, also portrayed in the Philippines' deadliest Islamic militant group.

It quoted Khaddafy Janjalani as saying his group had received funds from two men close to Bin Laden, identifying one of them as Jamal Khalifa. In an e-mail sent to the Inquirer, Malek's office did not deny ties with Abu Sayyaf. Reuters

Viets rescue 9 RP fishermen adrift at sea for 4 days

A VIETNAMESE FISHING BOAT RESCUED nine Filipino fishermen who spent four days adrift in the South China Sea, officials said yesterday.

The men were spotted clinging to an improvised raft 240 kilometers west of Subic on Wednesday, said Commander Joseph Coyiuto, Philippine Coast Guard spokesperson.

The fishermen's motorboat had capsized on Jan. 27 after big waves and strong winds snapped the outfit's engine a coast guard report said.

In the next three days, several foreign vessels passed but did not stop to rescue the drifting men, the report said. On the fourth day, a fishermen from the Vietnamese fishing boat picked them from the water.

A coast guard vessel was sent to the area to pick up the fishermen, who were headed for a docker on board and then brought to the coast guard headquarters in Manila on Friday officials said.

The report said the fishermen left Liaoan town in Bataan on Jan. 25 for the vicinity of the Scarborough Shoals, which is claimed by China and the Philippines. AP

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Saturday, February 3, 2007
4th Week in Ordinary Time
White / Annual

1st Reading: Heb 11:32-37, 39-12:1
Gospel: Mark 6:14-16

The apostles returned and reported to Jesus all they had done and taught. Then he said to them, You all by yourselves to a remote place and learn some rest." For there were so many people coming and going that the apostles had no time even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a remote place by themselves.

But people saw them leaving and many would know where they were going. So from all the towns they hurried there and got there ahead of them.

As Jesus went ashore he saw a large crowd, and he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things.

Commentary

We are quite used to the idea of leaders, people of position, great wealth, generous contributors to worthy causes. Jesus is not like that. He is different. He is not impressed by the things that we admire. He does not seek the kind of people we would choose to be his friends. He does not choose the kind of people we would choose to be his disciples. He does not choose the kind of people we would choose to be his apostles. He does not choose the kind of people we would choose to be his followers. He does not choose the kind of people we would choose to be his servants. He does not choose the kind of people we would choose to be his ministers. He does not choose the kind of people we would choose to be his messengers. He does not choose the kind of people we would choose to be his witnesses. He does not choose the kind of people we would choose to be his martyrs. He does not choose the kind of people we would choose to be his saints. He does not choose the kind of people we would choose to be his angels. He does not choose the kind of people we would choose to be his archangels. He does not choose the kind of people we would choose to be his seraphim. He does not choose the kind of people we would choose to be his cherubim. He does not choose the kind of people we would choose to be his thrones. He does not choose the kind of people we would choose to be his dominions. He does not choose the kind of people we would choose to be his principalities. He does not choose the kind of people we would choose to be his powers. He does not choose the kind of people we would choose to be his virtues. He does not choose the kind of people we would choose to be his archangels. He does not choose the kind of people we would choose to be his angels.

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Finance
INSURANCE COMMISSION
1071 United Nations Avenue
Manila

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Notice is hereby given that **SOUTH SEA SURETY & INSURANCE CO., INC.** was ordered to cease and desist from transacting insurance business for cause effective September 21, 2006. On October 4, 2006, the Honorable Court of Appeals issued a Temporary Restraining Order valid for sixty (60) days, or until December 4, 2006. The Company subsequently filed a Motion for the Issuance of a Writ of Preliminary Injunction but the same was denied in a Resolution promulgated on December 11, 2006. In effect, the Cease and Desist Order issued earlier by this Commission was reinstated since December 5, 2006. Since then, no new and/or renewal business of any kind or character can be done by said company or for such company by its agents in the Philippines unless and until its authority to do business is restored by the Commissioner. The Company was placed under conservatorship on October 2, 2006, pursuant to the provisions of Section 248 of the Insurance Code, as amended.

Atty. Rexanie Ilarian Reyes, with office address at Unit 401 Greenbelt Mansion, 106 Perea Street, Legaspi Village, Makati City, and contact numbers 8921598 and 8181111 local 211, is the appointed Conservator.

(Sgd.) EVANGELINE CROISETOMO ESCOBILLO
Insurance Commissioner

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SEALED BID SALE of used US government-owned Office Furniture, Household Furniture/Furnishings & Appliances, Computer Equipment, and unused vehicle spare parts on an **"As Is-Where Is"** basis.

Property may be inspected at the Disposal Warehouse, Seafront Compound, US Embassy, Roxas Boulevard, Pasay City (beside Manila Cathedral) on February 8 & 9, 2007 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 nn and 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Bids, accompanied by a fully refundable cash deposit of at least 20% of the bid price, will be accepted at the GSO Cashier located at Seafront Compound from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 nn on February 8, 2007 and from 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 nn and 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. on February 9, 2007.

Please be advised that there is no vehicle access or parking available at the Seafront Compound. Pedestrian access will be limited to the P.B. Harrison gate only. Please bring a valid proof of identification.

For particulars, please contact:

Mr. Manuel Fidel C. Holandez
Tel. No. 528-6300 ext. 2703

TOO LATE THE DOCUMENT: Governor Pilod pins over the contents of a document he sent to the Supreme Court requesting for the creation of an independent court to handle cases involving terrorist suspects and to transfer them to Manila.

JAIL WARDEN Nin Pilod points to the bayuko where the inmates headed after holding prison. At press time yesterday Mamk Cmdr. Emmanuel Pilod called the murder-rivet Pilod a relative.

48 bolt Cotabato jail; MILF rebels blamed for raid

From page A1

mates with about a dozen security guards watching over cells.

Using an M203 grenade launcher, the raiders blasted a large hole in the perimeter fence to penetrate the jailhouse located in Barangay Awan here.

Guards sought cover

"They were armed with high-powered guns. A 15-minute exchange of fire between our group and the attackers occurred before they left," Assistant Jail Warden Redeemo Manzigan said.

The guards were outnumbered and overpowered, he added.

Jail guards had to seek cover and withdraw after grenades were hurled at them," Manzigan said.

In October last year, alleged MILF fighters also broke into the Maguindanao provincial jail in Gumbasa City and spirited out a dozen inmates, including a bomb suspect.

The MILF denied any hand in yesterday's raid although a ranking rebel leader admitted that some of the suspects could be its members.

Three suspects in the 2003 bombing of a bus terminal in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat province were among those who escaped. They were identified as Mamdou Ruiz, Salman Zaito Ali and Ismido Yakan.

On red alert

A fourth suspected bomber, Rido Manangking, also an MILF commander, refused to join the jailbreak, authorities said.

Manangking was released early this month after he was linked to the Oct. 31 Midtown terminal explosion that killed six people.

At the time of yesterday's raid, the jail guards were on "red (full) alert" because of reports of an imminent attack.

Manzigan told reporters that the rebels, numbering 25 to 30, surprised the guards by firing a grenade launcher.

The grenade tore a hole in the wall at the back of the one-story jail building, and also wounded a guard and a visitor, inmate.

The raiders then destroyed the padlocks of the cells and herded the prisoners out, Manzigan said.

He said the other guards, some of whom rushed to the jail from their sleeping quarters, engaged the attackers in a brief firefight but could not stop the rebels.

To Liguasan Marsh

Manzigan said most inmates refused to join the escape.

The attackers and some of the escapees fled on foot toward the Liguasan Marsh area, an identified territory of the MILF.

Another batch of escapees reportedly commandeered a passenger jeep in Sinsuhan town, about 5 km away from the jail.

Pilod said the intelligence reports about the imminence of an attack indicated that the MILF had long been planning to spirit out their jailed comrades.

An intelligence officer of the Army's 602nd Infantry Brigade, which has jurisdiction over North Cotabato, said they had also received similar reports.

"This was not an ordinary incident. This was a well-planned operation by the MILF to spring their members who are in jail for kidnapping and bombing," Pilod said.

Going slow on MILF

Told that the police were not immediately saying that the raiders were suspected MILF guerrillas, Pilod said on radio dzSB: "You must understand that the GRP (Philippine National Police) is under orders from the national government to go slow in pinning down the MILF because of the ongoing peace talks."

"I am not under the PGH I am a local government executive and I say my piece when I need to say my piece," the governor said.

Pilod said 18 MILF members were among those who fled with the raiders. He did not say where he got the figure of 18.

'Shoot them down'

"I have ordered police to shoot those very dangerous people if they will resist arrest. They are better dead than a menace to our communities."

Yes if they MILF committee chair, said the attack was not sanctioned by his organization. But he admitted some of the attackers could be MILF supporters who acted on their own.

Ghazali Jaafar, MILF political affairs chief, said the MILF leadership "does not sanction action that constitutes a violation of the existing ceasefire agreement."

Supt. Federico Dulay, North Cotabato police chief, said the police were not sure the attackers were MILF rebels.

"We are certain that they are allies of terror groups like the Jemaah Islamiyah, because they freed the three bombers. But we are also looking into the possible involvement of the MILF," Dulay said.

MILF helping in manhunt

MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu said Pilod and other authorities should not immediately link the MILF to acts of violence in Central Mindanao.

"We are not involved in the jailbreak. We are even willing to cooperate," Kabalu told the Inquirer.

He said the MILF was now helping in the manhunt for the escapees of the attack.

Pilod offered a cash reward of P50,000 for each recaptured prisoner. He also announced the relief of the jail's warden, Nick Pilod, a relative.

Warden Pilod said in a report to the governor that some 80 armed men joined the initial attack at the back of the jail, then about 25 men in fatigue uniform entered the jail compound.

The MILF has been fighting for self-rule for decades and has an estimated 12,000 armed fighters. It has been engaged in peace talks with the government and has forged a ceasefire. Edwin Fernandez, Charlie C. Señase, Jeoffrey Ajeten, Inquirer Mindanao, AP, Reuters

RESCUERS carry the body of one of the victims.

TRAGEDY IN ZAMBO

ARTISTS rendering of the explosion on an oncoming passenger bus comes alongside a truck laden with chemicals. Blast left body parts of victims on the roadside.

Zambo gas . . .

From page A1

industries. In solid form, it is known to fix an and is important in refrigeration. Experts say in sufficient dose burst in the blast of this or under extreme pressure.

The force of the explosion hurled parts of the truck as far as 1,000 meters away from the site, police said. The blast also stampeded the throng of some 40 those killed, who included children.

The explosion was so powerful that it threw people in the air 100 meters away from the zone, said Glo Ann Hingpit, whose husband, Romeo, a motor mechanic was among the fatality injured.

"I saw body parts littering the area. Some were in the trees, others in the center," she said.

The truck was travelling down-hill on the highway when it broke apparently killed, police said.

Rescuers hit by blast

An 80-bus carrying about 60 passengers was passing by when the accident happened. The blast beat the truck flew away the roof of the bus and hurled it to the other side of the road, police said.

The dead and injured included those on the bus.

Several people from other vehicles crashed to the side of the driver of the crashed truck but were also hit by the blast, witnesses said.

"It was at this moment that the explosion occurred," said Maj. Gary Cachico, concerning officer of the Army's 102d Infantry Battalion.

Some passengers from the bus tried to help the driver of the smoking truck, three shots were heard and people started running," said Inocel Jiapi, Ramon Dobocanec, police chief of Zamboanga del Sur.

He said police recovered more than 24 bodies and the decapitated head of a person.

Dexter Tabo, who witnessed the incident, said his brother Victor and some people from other vehicles tried to rescue the driver and his two helpers when the explosion occurred.

"Where he awoke doesn't know my older brother Victor and scores of other people screaming and moaning in pain," Tabo told the Inquirer.

The truck driver was among those killed, police said.

"The truck's brakes obviously malfunctioned and the driver lost control," Cortiqui said.

The incident caused a monstrous traffic jam.

Mark Glenn Tabuni, 24, one of the truck's crew, said he saved himself by jumping off the truck before it overturned and helped pull out another truck helper.

He said they were bringing lime soap to a soft drink plant in Zamboanga City, about 300 kms to the south.

Bystanders, rescuers

Medjie Bellanio was riding a motorcycle driven by her husband when they were caught in traffic because of the overturned truck.

"All of a sudden, there was a loud explosion and I saw thick smoke. I fell on the road. I could not get up. I could not walk," she said.

Raul Molina, chief of staff of Sen. Aurora Cordillo, said the environmentalist figure was difficult to determine because most from throw on the bus, mainly people on the ground were shredded.

Molina said the high casualty figure could be attributed to the fact that people had tried to approach the truck to help its occupants and that sets where the chemicals exploded.

"Some of those also died. We could see no how many bystanders were killed because mangled bodies were everywhere," Molina said.

Molina said 19 bodies which were considered "whole" had been recovered from the burned bus. By "whole" bodies, he said he means intact with arms and legs.

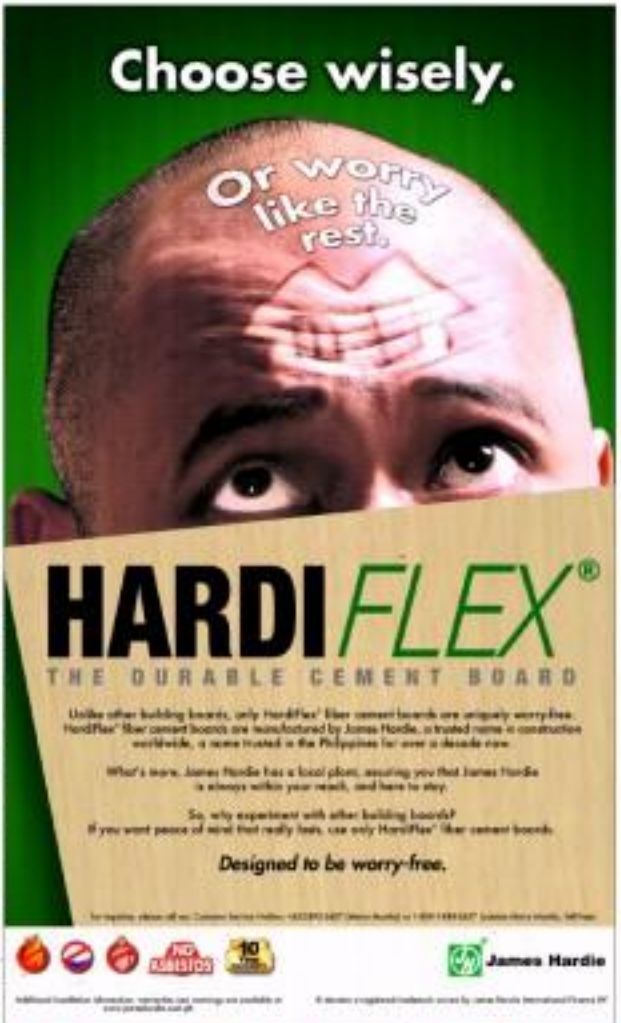
"Many of those inside the bus were burned beyond recognition or their bodies were so dismembered it was even difficult to determine who were children, or women or men," he said.

Not bomb attack

He said the lower part of the cargo truck distinguished because of the explosion.

Police said some parts of the truck were recovered 1,000 meters away from the site.

"We categorically discount speculation that it was a bomb attack carried out by terrorists," Col. Emmanuel Bocos, 52nd IB chief, also said. Blah, PNP Research and AP



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OPINION

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Tatad's moral fight

EDITORIAL

FORMER SEN. FRANCISCO TATAD WANTS TO start a moral crusade to clean up Philippine politics. Forgive us if we do not plan to join the line he eloquently wants to form behind him.

That Philippine politics needs cleaning up, there is no debate. But Tatad is hardly the right person to build the broom. His first appearance on history's stage was to announce the declaration of martial law in 1972. His last appearance, almost 30 years later, was to execute on the Senate floor the majority's decision to leave the second Jose Velarde travelogue unopened. That decision, which was obviously designed to stop the discovery of the truth, doomed the Estrada impeachment trial.

These are not the actions of a moral leader. Perhaps if he were to apologize and then atone for these actions, we might hear the words that issue from him differently. But he has not done so; if anything, as in the continuing controversy over the events of 2001, he continues to insist on his version.

Like the disgraced former president, Joseph Estrada, Tatad is quick to claim a clean conscience, which he vividly characterizes as the ability "to snore quietly in my sleep every night in the hope of waking up in the morning in a loving and nourished God." But if there is any moral lesson we have learned to the last in turbulent years, it is that conscience can be truly capacious—and that therefore it can neither be a true guide for nor a sure guarantee of collective moral action.

We need something a little more objective. Unfortunately for Tatad, that something is nowhere to be found in his now famous open letter.

We need our moral leaders to tell us the truth. But Tatad is parsimonious with the truth, beginning with the letter's very first paragraph. "My only concern is the honor of our party and wellbeing of our people," he writes. The United Opposition is not a party; surely Tatad knows that. And if the people's wellbeing is in fact his "only concern," why is removing himself from the 2010 the only possible option? Surely he can fight for reform within. (Speaking of truth-telling: How does one snore quietly?)

We need our moral leaders to keep a sense of proportion. The dynasty issue is not the opposition's problem alone. Take a look at the Arroyos: The President's eldest son is a congressman from Pampanga and the middle son wants to be a congressman from Negros Occidental, and indeed to anyone who followed the 2004 elections closely. He wrestles why having gained "close to 11 million" votes in 1995, his 2004 total was "savaged to nearly half that number." He does not seem to understand that running a dismal race for vice president in 1998, his role in the Estrada impeachment trial, three years out of office—that all these had something to do with his current worthlessness.

Not least, we need our moral leaders to be consistent. Tatad says he cannot accept a situation where three of the opposition's candidates for the Senate have close kin already in the chamber. He noted since the presence of Sen. Loi Ejercito and Sen. Jinggoy Estrada as an aberration, "the result of an extraordinary situation." There was a need for Estrada to show that he still enjoyed popular support, he says, hence Loi's candidacy and then Jinggoy's. But Loi ran in 2001. Surely her victory was enough to move Estrada's need? What is the difference, then, between Jinggoy's candidacy in 2004 and JV Ejercito's in 2007? Is Tatad saying Estrada no longer needs to show he continues to enjoy public backing?

Here's the difference: Tatad was a candidate in 2004. He wasn't ever considered as a candidate this year—at least until he had his chance to object to something he had previously not objected to, and Estrada took him under so offer him a slot. By then it was too late—for Tatad most of all.

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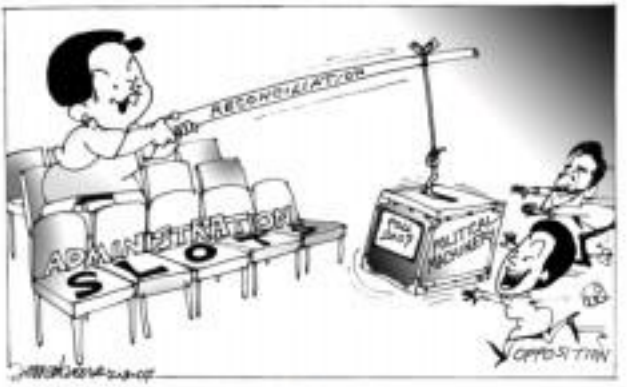

Twenty years of the 1987 Constitution

SEPARATE OPINION

Joaquin A. Cruz

THE PRESENT CONSTITUTION COMPLETED its 20th year yesterday since its ratification on Feb. 2, 1987. It had been framed by a commission composed of 50 members appointed by President Corazon Aquino, who herself served as chairman of the body created by the required plebiscite. Many citizens doubtful about some of its provisions nevertheless voted for it because they felt it would provide the stability the country needed after the turmoil of the Marcos years. Opposition to it, while spirited, was largely disorganized and consequently ineffective.

The Commission of 1986, after which the present charter was largely patterned, was attended after only five years with the lengthening of the presidential term of office, the establishment of the bicameral Congress and the assembly with a bicameral Congress, and the successors of the statutory Commission on Elections into a constitutional body in 1940; they we had already become independent, it was revalented with the steady adoption of the Party Representation Act (basically made to an historic one satellite again. In 1970, it was revised by an election constitutional convention but was convened by charter during martial law years by Constitution of 1973 that deserves only this historical mention here.

The Constitution of 1987 does not have what we might call a checkered history. There have been sporadic suggestions and even successive attempts to change it but they have been unsuccessful so far. In 1987, the initiative intended to extend President Fidel Ramos' term of office was to define in the Santiago and Piedad cases on the lack of a valid implementing law. Last year, another initiative, the one advocated by President Macapagal-Arroyo, also floundered in the Supreme Court to the people's applause.

President Arroyo and her sidekicks, Speaker Jose de Venecia, have not given up their hope to replace the presidential government with a parliamentary system which they expect to remain in power as its prime ministers. Who of them will be the head of the new government if it materializes is still in doubt. But their quarrel and their determination to revise the Constitution by hook or by crook will have to be settled pending the outcome of the elections this coming May.

Much depends on the results of such elections because the composition of the new Congress will determine if the Constitution shall be overturned and, if so, the process to be employed: if the House of Representatives remains under the control of the present Raise Coalition, which is doubtful if the election site count, which is also doubtful, it may decide the ballot issue by voting separately on the debris of the decision last year. The second method, the historically but appropriately called Con-ass, will probably not be attempted again because of the continued Senate opposition to it. That will leave the only remaining alternative method, the calling of a constitutional convention.

It may be premature at this time to discuss the constitutional convention when the attention of the public is focused on the election campaigns, particularly for the Senate. Candidates of candidacy must be filed not later than Feb. 12, but the ultimate votes and the opposition have yet to finalize their respective slates. Notably, there is a scramble for inclusion in the opposition ticket but an apparent reluctance to be drafted into the administration list.

The most urgent is that for the senatorial Tito Sotto and Tessie Oreta, stalwarts of Joseph Estrada during his impeachment trial, are willing to join Mr. Ebdane's tactical battle team and their erstwhile adversary is prepared to accept them, limits and all, for their "winnability." Irrefutably, without ability seems to be the criterion for public service now.

I think the constitutional convention should be an important issue in the coming elections. Instead of legalling their candidacy with sing and dances or accusations of their material sins, the candidates should show that they are not mere wannabees. They should discuss why, or why not, a constitutional convention should be called and, in the affirmative, the qualifications to be required of the elective delegates.

Such credentials should include technical qualifications, which in turn required of elected officials under the Constitution, which must be the reason for the many incompetents in the public service today.

There is also the apprehension that the various members of the legislature may field and support the election in the constitutional convention of their opponents and other creatures in gain control by their political dynasties of what ought to be a non-partisan convention. This should be avoided by disqualifying from the body candidates belonging to a political party or related, within a legally prescribed, and disqualified officials to be governors.

But still there be elections in May with his heroes facing certain defeat unless Gary succeeds in the course?

Hope for Hubert Webb

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod

AND SO THE 11-YEAR NIGHTMARE OF Hubert Webb continues. The Court of Appeals Special Division of Five, by a 3-1 vote, *trial* Webb in December 2006 decision upholding the decision of Regional Trial Court Judge Amelita Tolentino that a survey of the Court of Appeals finding Webb and five co-accused as principals and one co-accused as accessory of the crime of rape with homicide.

My nightmare continues as well, because it gives me nightmares that an innocent person has already spent 11 years behind bars and still may have to do so in the years to come on appeal to the Supreme Court. I've said it before, and I will say it again: Hubert Webb is innocent of this crime.

Nevertheless I find no small amount of ease, solace in the fact that while the decision of the 10th Division of the Court of Appeals in December 2005 unanimously upheld Tolentino, a close review of the facts of the case, upon motion for reconsideration by Webb et al., caused one of the three justices—Associate Justice Lucenito Tagle—to change his mind. The lack of unanimity necessitated, per Rules of the Court of Appeals, the creation of a special division of five by adding two justices, who were chosen by raffle. And one of those two justices—Bienvenido Catalan—came to the same conclusion that Tagle did: Webb et al. were not guilty of the crime of rape with homicide. Their dissenting opinions are most convincing and because their logic is unassailable, it gives me hope that the Supreme Court will see things their way.

The disagreement between the majority and the minority centered around two issues: whether or not the witnesses were credible, and whether or not the defense of alibi was strong. Obviously the majority took the position that the prosecution witnesses were credible, the defense witnesses were not, and the defense of alibi was weak—the same view as Tolentino's. The minority took the opposite view.

Here are some highlights of Tolentino's decision:

"The prosecution's case is inherently weak, built as it is upon the flagrantly inconsistent and incredible testimony by a shifty and shuffling prosecution star witness, and second, because the defense was able to prove convincingly that it was physically impossible for ... Hubert Webb to have been at the scene of the crime at the time of its commission.

"... I am far from being impressed with the veracity or trustworthiness of the testimony of the prosecution's star witness, Jessica Alfaro, considering her history of drug addiction, viz-à-vis the plain and palpable inconsistencies, contradictions and irreconciliation in her various versions, plus the fact that it took her four years to come forward to testify. The long delay goes against the very grain of human experience, for drug addiction ... ought to have warned the court not to rely on her testimony which could or might have been impaired or addled by substance abuse.

"... I am thus constrained to wonder what strange vocabulary or manner logic inspired and impelled the trial court to give its unconditional seal of confidence to Ms Alfaro (indeed to take her testimony as gospel truth).

"... In short, before me this Ms Alfaro's narration of the events ... was in many points excessively similar to that set forth in the sensational confessions or accompanying testimony rendered [in 1991] by certain members of the so-called Alayon-Rabaja Gang." (The minority view: Alfaro could come to testify because *mas'ilip gusto*, climbing fence and opening gate; passing out garage light; breaking the glass in the door; window shooting Magnaye; and killed young girl crying and shouting and killed on. One of the participants surrendered and executed his affidavit because, by his account, he was frightened by his conscience.—ed.)

"... Ms Alfaro's testimony puts the severest a strain on the credibility of this Court. I think it takes the faith of 20 men to believe her extraordinary tale.

"... In between the irresistible and implausible the testimony of the prosecution's star witness Jessica Alfaro, several government authorities who acted thereon in accordance with their admitted duty. In view of this, I find it hard to imagine how these could have been fabrication—unless one has such tremendous power and influence strong enough to sway all these people in the official structure, including the Senate in the United States. The point is that the prosecution in the case under review has not adduced a shred of evidence that any of these ... official documents was a fabrication. Nor yet that the Webb family—especially former Sen. Freddie Webb—has such tremendous power or influence to sway all the people in the official concerned, including those in the US Department of State and in the US Department of Justice.

"... While the defense of alibi as a rule deserves scant consideration ... it is not always ... without merit. In fact, when it is sufficiently and well documented with documentary evidence and prompted with the cogency, improbabilities and inconsistencies of the prosecution's evidence, as in the case under review, the defense of alibi must be accepted as true and should carry the day for [Webb]."

Hang on, Hubert. There is hope.

New Legion award for Tritz

Political Tidbits

Belinda Olivares-Cassman

THE FIRST NATIONAL LEGION, FOR HONorable Seeing (FNLHS), which recently received Cardinal Sin's approval to serve as a substitute for the May visionaries, is now asking permission to continue its rosy parallel quick counts. The problem is that Namfrel has traditionally been the entity recognized to conduct it. Under the law, only non-entities can be authorized to monitor the whole sequence of the electoral process, and this has always gone to Namfrel, headed by Jose Concepcion, which had lobbied on a lot of couples from church people to our jose. Now that Namfrel is no longer the PPCRV's Catholic Church-based group, is now represented by core and religious leaders who are both identified with the non-Aquino movement. The Bishop-Led in Fri. Jose attended Cardinal Sin and, IT reminded Jose Concepcion and longtime Namfrel and Makati Business Club official Guillermo Luz on being labeled the Church group's position, although Luz was also quoted as saying he didn't know precisely where he stood. The Comelec will hold a hearing this Tuesday on the FNLHS's petition.

* * *

Recall that some of the above personalities joined the call for President Macapagal-Arroyo's resignation in July 2006. In addition, some bishops, led by CBCP president Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, have sometimes interestingly referred to Cbcp in their Legislative Agenda, a document written like Pangasan Archbishop Oscar Cruz by the day. Thus, on this issue of conducting a quick count, it's logical to ask whether the FNLHS' stands on the matter are considered public pleas to national issues. On the other hand, Namfrel has maintained strict neutrality in various elections and has had tremendous experience in this area. I think it would do a lot more credible job than the FNLHS.

* * *

My job of covering as PICC for Fr. Pierre Tito and Delia Postmistress for the past 20 years has been a breeze, as awards and honors have rained on this saintly priest, now 82 years old, for his noble work in saving more children from becoming dropouts and/or drug addicts. I think it is only fitting that Cardinal Sin, through Ambassador Howard Chanco, conferred on Fr. Tito Filipino's highest and most prestigious decoration, the Order of the Legion of Honor, with rank of Officer, at the Manila Hall School in Pasadena. In 1986, Fr. Tito was already conferred the knighthood of the Philippine Legion, that of "Knight," so this is a promotion of sorts. As Chancellor explained, the highest honor a private citizen can aspire for is the title of "commander," since its highest rank, the "Grand Cross," is reserved only for heads of state. In 1986, Fr. Tito was also conferred the Outstanding Filipino Award, which is the highest award granted by Gov. Charles de Gaulle. Chancellor explained that the Legion was created by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802, and it is conferred on Filipino and foreign men and women for outstanding achievement in military or civil life. More recently, it has been conferred on entrepreneurs, high-level civil servants, scientists and artists. Fr. Tito's citation for the Legion of Honor cites a wide "height."

* * *

What makes this personal award more interesting is that Fr. Tito grew up like Ninoy's childhood friend and took his oath, together with a handful of other Ateneo, before President Ferdinand Marcos as a Filipino citizen. In his humble acceptance speech, he admitted that when he left Bethlehem de Filipinas to study in the United States, the latter immediately exclaimed, "Miss Him, nobody grows up French in Kentucky." Uncowed, undaunted, with typical calm, Fr. Tito replied, "It was just due to my serious misunderstanding with the native speakers, but in order to facilitate his work with Filipino street children. Otherwise, I wouldn't be here pointing out this awkward comment." Before leaving Manila to attend Fr. Tito, he said, Marcos has chosen to convince the administration three times.

* * *

The Filipino people, whom Fr. Tito has embraced for half a century, can do no less.

* * *

People are battling their heads about the new premier of a "hub opening" for Iloilo. Ne'ertheless, I've been many times to various cities that have proclaimed their dire legal questions and unfinished successions, the latter are despite further bids when's happening to the multimillion airport in Bacolod. Incidentally, Bacolod-Silay Airport in Bacolod, which opened last September, I was reported to be "underutilized," which I noted that was pleasing assumption of used and plan, situated in the most optimistic in Asia, has become "trouble plagued" and even a withdrawal "unconstitutional" statement.

* * *

Thailand's Department of Civil Aviation postponed resuming an international safety overall after an the airport's runways and terminal managers have to be "repaired" due to cracks. Thailand's transport minister said there are over 100 days open open in 25 areas and repair could cost any where between $1.6 million and $86 million. Hence repairs will be "temporary" and will cover its usable length by half, only smaller aircraft can land there, and the traffic has resumed some resuming flights to be directed to other airports. Because of the possible cracks, planes cannot exceed 11 of their 13 parking spots, and 35 of the 102 terminal has like air bridges are unusable. An inspection was directed the resumption of 12 terminal ground stations in the passenger terminal, which would cause more than 3 hours to a passenger terminal taller caused water to leak in the lower floor and damage luggage. And there are reports of irregularities in the management of commercial operations in an interview with Agence France-Presse, Thailand Bureau consultants alluded to the airport were to explaining an inspection problem that, as a report put it, "prompted him to stage this tough final action." Thats true." The airport management would rather

LETTERS

Abandoning the few honest candidates for lack of diplomas

ALLOW US TO JOIN THE DIALOGUE SET-woven Ang Kapatiran (PRB, 1/15/07) and David San Juan (PRB, 1/8/07) on the issue of diplomas.

1. San Juan has conveniently dismissed the issue pertaining to Ang Kapatiran's leaders and claiming unscheduled misfortunes. Thus they do seem to have admitted by both sides.

2. It is an economy where college level education has been and is largely unavailable to a large segment of society – principally for economic reasons. San Juan is right in his perception that the big Kapatiran's advocacy requiring candidates (for certain elective positions in government) to possess college/university degrees is inconsistently elitist.

Consider further that the requirement in effect prevents the large sector of the electorate from voting for one of its own, thereby limiting representation to privileged few.

It would help if our political scientists conduct a research to find out if the constituents of established democracies for most of the more recent times have such requirements.

3. Ang Kapatiran's low key evaluation of electoral candidates in the process is one with significance for employment. We would like to believe that the honesty of values by which Ang Kapatiran would assess candidates stems primarily the most desirable character traits of sincerity, dedication and morals; secondarily, track record if any, be it in government service, the professions, business, civil society etc., and lastly of all, academic credentials, which even for employment are subordinated to relevant experience.

An ironic point is, among the elected, college graduates are a dime a dozen, whereas those possessing the character traits primarily sought are a small minority... if not scarce.

It would then seem ironic that Ang Kapatiran Elite Dispersal of Archaic Greece with his banners in search of a few leaders more on the canons of leftover would abandon those found for want of diplomas.

We urge Ang Kapatiran to reconsider this singular but critical deterrent to its appeal for broad support.

—ALFREDO S. LAGUNZAD, Ed.D.
Barangay Ugong Norte
Quezon City 1110

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
National Capital Region
[illegible]

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/establishments have filed with this Regional Office applications for Alien Employment Permits:

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National	Position
888 DAEWOO BUSINESS PROCESS SERVICES PHILIPPINES, INC. 6/F PBCom Tower, 8768 Ayala Avenue, Makati City	Kang Hyung Jin	Assistant Manager - Workforce
TOPGUARD, INC. Unit C, 6/F Manila Place Bldg., Clark North Gate, Mabalacat City	Kwak Won Ju	Operations Director
HANJIN/PAL CORPORATION 2/F Corvalho Condo 1, Herrera St., Legaspi Village, Makati City	Hwangpo Hee	Technical Manager
HANJIN/PAL CORPORATION 2/F Corvalho Condo 1, Herrera St., Legaspi Village, Makati City	Young Mun Kee	Mechanical Engineer
FORMOSAN GARMENT (PHIL) CO., INC. 150 R. Hidalgo Ave., Talon II, Las Piñas City	Yuan Tsai Lan	Packing / Finishing Supervisor
WORLD KING AND SEDEX TRADING CORP. Financial Center, G. Masangkay Ave., Binondo	Song Wan Jung	Sales Consultant
QUALITY PRODUCTS & SERVICE INC. Km. 10 West Service Road, Bldg. 5, Sucat Compound, Cupang, Muntinlupa City	Ajmer Abdul Jabbar Alkatiri	Business Unit Head Consultant of a Middle East Based Company
SKY JOURNEY MANAGEMENT & CONSULTANCY SERVICES, INC. 104 S. Wawang Sumo Road, Binondo, Manila	Yong Ho Jun	Travel Consultant
PORT HOTEL CASINO MANILA (NEW COAST HOTEL) 1588 Roxas Blvd., cor. M.H. del Pilar, Manila	Hong Sung Chun	Chinese Chef
FORMOSAN GARMENT (PHIL) CO., INC. 150 R. Hidalgo, Talon V, Las Piñas City	Jeoung Jho	Packing / Finishing Supervisor
PAP MEDICAL DISTRIBUTORS INC. Unit 1501 National Telecom Administration Bldg., Tel. Road cor. Timog Ave., Quezon City	Sung Sup Jun	Technical Specialist Consultant
FLEUR EMBEL, INC. - PHILIPPINES 2/F Asian Star Bldg., Annex Drive, Filinvest, Alabang, Muntinlupa City	Francis F. Fukuzawa	Principal Process Engineer
FLEUR EMBEL, INC. - PHILIPPINES 2/F Asian Star Bldg., Annex Drive, Filinvest, Alabang, Muntinlupa City	Andrew Adam Humphreys	Workstream Coordinator
ROBINSONS LAND CORPORATION Galleria Bldg., cor. EDSA Ave., Quezon City	Sangkyung Lee	Finance Manager
ROBINSONS LAND CORPORATION Galleria Bldg., cor. EDSA Ave., Quezon City	Wai Fung Chu	Finance Executive Asst. Lead
CUES FOUNTAIN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL 19 Annapolis St., Northeast Greenhills, San Juan, Metro Manila	Lindsay Gross	Physics Teacher
CUES FOUNTAIN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL 19 Annapolis St., Northeast Greenhills, San Juan, Metro Manila	Tyson Stephanger	Computer Teacher
CUES FOUNTAIN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL 19 Annapolis St., Northeast Greenhills, San Juan, Metro Manila	Dina Mikkelsen	Computer Teacher
CUES FOUNTAIN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL 19 Annapolis St., Northeast Greenhills, San Juan, Metro Manila	Marlene Archer	Chemistry Teacher
INTELLIRISK PHILIPPINES, INC. 12/F Tower 1 (HCRI) Pkwy, Alabang, Muntinlupa City	Tyler Baringhausen	Manager - Operations
INTELLIRISK PHILIPPINES, INC. 12/F Tower 1 (HCRI) Pkwy, Alabang, Muntinlupa City	Sarah Chapin	Manager - Operations
INTELLIRISK PHILIPPINES, INC. 12/F Tower 1 (HCRI) Pkwy, Alabang, Muntinlupa City	Nicolas Chapin	Manager - Operations
TOPSPIN FOODS INC. 21 Kindle St., Brgy. Wack-Wack, Mandaluyong City	Yoshiko Ezaki	Sales and Marketing Manager
PHILIPPINE SKY TOP TRAVEL & TOURS CORP. 5-303 Kindle Corner Bldg., cor. Ten Wanza, Ortigas Center, San Juan, Metro Manila	Sir Danny Jung	President

If you have any information/objection to the above-mentioned application, please communicate with the Regional Director.

LOURDES M. TRAJANO
Regional Director

DFA: Court ordered release of Chinese poachers

I WRITE IN REFERENCE TO THE EDITORIAL "Warning diplomacy" (PDB, 1/30/07) which alerted the unadmonished assertion by the NCO Pamaldecos that the foreign affairs and agriculture departments and their respective secretaries conspired in "selling the country's national sovereignty and patrimony" in the case against the crew members of the vessel Hui Wei, which was found poaching in the Tubbataha Reef National Marine Park.

Pamaldecos based his assertion on a diplomatic note received by the DFA and DA from the Chinese Embassy in an earlier report, in another paper, the group's chair was quoted as saying that the Chinese ambassador's "letter would logically lead us to the conclusion that the two high officials surrendered like one to bones of the poachers)." This statement is a drastic case of non sequitur.

The aforesaid note released not through the DFAR or DA's information but upon the orders of the Regional Trial Court of Puerto Princesa on its own authority and discretion, thus, the responsibility for enforcing the law on this matter lies with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Philippine Coast Guard and Departments of Justice, among others. The DFA is respectful of these agencies' prerogatives.

As early as Jan. 5, the DFA had said that the case is for our courts to decide. Also on that date, the Office of the President, through Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said, "we will go through the usual (court) process."

Since the start of the case, the DFA has made clear to the Chinese that as far as the Philippine government is concerned, (a) the case is before Philippine courts, which will determine if there have been violations of Philippine laws and international conventions, (b) the Philippines is cognizant of the rights of duly accredited (under Philippine and international law and will give due regard to those rights; and (c) due process will be observed in the expeditious conclusion of the case.

In its "people-centered diplomacy," the DFA pursues, in the international arena, policies anchored on sustainable development that encourages economic growth while promoting environmental protection, and that at the same time is meant to enhance the overarching goal of eradicating poverty.

The DFA has been engaged in issues and initiatives that may not gain instant change, protect biodiversity and safeguard maritime resources. A signal contribution was the launching of the Davao Gulf Biodiversity on 29 Los Baños-area peace sign. Locally-driven, the DFA's maritime and ocean affairs Office has done significant work to foster delineating and preserving our maritime boundaries.

The men and women of the DFA and the foreign service are committed to advancing the interests of the country and the Filipino people in the world community. We will continually work with all sectors, notably those who care much about our fragile marine environment.

—L. EDUARDO BALLES,
acting spokesman,
Department of Foreign Affairs

An open challenge to religious leaders

ONCE AGAIN, THE FILIPINO NATION IS BACK to its favorite pastime—politics. Everywhere you go, people talk about the forthcoming May elections and the probable candidates from various political parties.

It is no different here in San Juan, Metro Manila. As early as December 2006, residents of San Juan have been smiling-take the mayoral candidates would be since our incumbent mayor, Joseph Ejercito Estrada, termed his last, save for senator. There is talk that his brother, former senator Jinggoy Estrada, will run for mayor, and so to assume the office to be vacated by his son. This explains why the streamers of Gamboa, announcing her Christmas message, are scattered all over San Juan.

The talented members of homes for mayor of San Juan was somehow confirmed by a story which reported that Sen. Jinggoy Estrada might feel his wife, Precy Estrada, in the mayoralty race in 2010. Well, I should bother just me the mentality, this will pit the Catholic Church, the Iglesia ni Cristo of Bishop Eduardo Manalo, the El Shaddai of Bro. Mike Velarde, the Jesus is Lord Movement of Bro. Eddie Villanueva, and even Bro. Eli Soriano's Ang Dating Daan and all other members in a severe test.

Will they support the candidacy of someone who is known to have, and/or will have, an illicit relationship with a married man? Pity, as the saying goes, allergic ang tanong? no be heard.

—DAVE BACANI,
606 Gen. Segundo St.,
San Juan, Metro Manila

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Selection Step	Date	Venue
I. Written Technical Exam • Luzon • Visayas • Mindanao	10, 13 & 16 of February	DTI Makati DTI Cebu DTI Davao
II. Panel Interview	21, 22, 26 & 27 of February	DTI Makati
III. Simulation Exercise	26, 27, 28 of February & 01, 02 of March	DTI Makati
IV. Psychological Appraisal	6, 7, 8 & 9 of March	TBA
V. ERCOM Interview	14 March	DTI Makati

Notes:

1. Each selection step is a hurdle point. Candidate has to meet the required rating per selection step to be able to proceed to the succeeding activity.
2. Specific date per selection step will be pre-assigned to successful candidates.
3. Candidates who pass the psychological examination will be scheduled to take the Career Service Professional Eligibility Exam. CSC Examination date will be announced later.

CORE REQUISITES

Education, Relevant Training, Age Limit & Citizenship:

- Bachelor's degree preferably in business, economics, international studies, Law and marketing. Master's degree is an advantage.
- At least 25 years old and not more than 35 years of age upon appointment by the President of the Philippines
- Filipino Citizen with unimpeached integrity
- Holder of a Civil Service Professional Eligible or Bar/Passer or any related Philippine Licensure Examination or a Career Executive Service Eligible (CESE)
- Eight (8) hours relevant training

Experience and Skills:

- At least four (4) years commercial & open-market experience in marketing, banking and finance, economics
- Excellent communication and presentation skill both written and oral
- Fluency in English and preferably other major foreign languages
- Computer literate (MS Word)

Knowledge of:

- Current international and local economic issues and business developments
- Trade and investment policies
- Export and investment marketing
- Business negotiations
- Market research methodologies

Ability to:

- Recognize and identify entrepreneurial opportunities in markets
- Market the Philippines as a viable source of products and services and as an investment location for international investment
- Think analytically and exercise judgment
- Understand and interpret strategies as to the competencies inherent in the job
- Manage workload under a wide variety of environmental (i.e. to initiate strong "thank no one")
- Create a good impression, command attention and respect and show an air of confidence
- Be a team player yet able to work independently

Secure application forms from:

Human Resource Development Service
4/F Trade & Industry Building,
361 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City

Or

Visit www.business.gov.ph
for downloadable forms

Applications sent through regular mail or e-mail should be received by HRDS on **09 February 2007, 5:00 p.m.**

Applications received after February 9 will not be accepted, unless posted before February 9.

Submit application to:

The assistant secretary
Human Resource Development Service
4/F Trade & Industry Building,
361 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City
E-mail: hrds@dti.gov.ph

Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

Marines return to Basilan vs Sayyaf

MARINES move in with their tanks and equipment in Basilan, a return that was met with skepticism by some residents.

ISABELA CITY, BASILAN—THE Philippine Marines continued its deployment here as the Army's pullout has been completed.

An additional batch of Marines, numbering about 700, disembarked from a Navy ship, which docked at the shorelines of Barangay Tabuk here recently before it is to sail Wednesday from Balut, Lamitan del Sur.

But a single government official was around to welcome the arriving soldiers.

But some Basilan tried to sell their fresh catch to the incoming soldiers and curious children occasionally giggled as they watched from their neighborhood.

The elements of the Marine Battalion Landing Team 5 (BBLT5) did not mind the observers of a welcoming party as they unloaded their armored vehicles, transport trucks and heavy and other combat equipment.

Some of them also brought along their farm animals like ducks, chickens and turkeys.

A soldier said: hard to see if the most important requirements of the merchant against the Abu Sayyaf and their allies from the Jemaah Islamiyah.

Lt. Col. Blas Ballesteros, operations officer of the 1st Marine Brigade, said two more battalions will be arriving in the area here days to continue the Army's job.

PBGen. the recent arrival, the number of Marines here is more over 1,000.

"It's part of our challenge here," Col. Ramon Alvir, 1st Marine Brigade commander, said as he surveyed the dilapidated base, which the Army's 18th Infantry Brigade had left.

Lt. Col. Jessie Bagayong, MBLT5 commander, said the Marines are not actually strangers to this province.

He said that was one of their areas of deployments in the 1990s.

"So there is no need for our men to adjust because traditionally Basilan belongs to the coverage of the Philippine Marines. It's like returning to our mother's arms," he said.

But it appears the "homecoming" was not a welcome sight for many residents of the province.

Basilan Bishop Martin Jumoad told the Inquirer that 90 percent of the people of the city alone, where the Marines would be encamping, are "strongly opposing the return of the troops."

Jumoad said the people of Basilan have not forgotten the days when the Marines roamed around instead of preserving them.

Hilarry Bharry, a community leader, said he fears that the return of the Marines would widen the gap between Muslims and Christians.

"The Army was doing a good job, such as bridging better relationships. As for the Marines, why they have to return here?" Bharry commented.

Tom Bagayong said those opposing their arrival should give them a chance.

He said majority of his troops are natives of Basilan and that they can easily interact with the people. Jodel S. Alipala, Inquirer Mindanao

Ex-Subic chief says BCDA, bank squabble delaying land payment

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—Former subic civil process of property that are on the patrol the Subic Bank for. Expressway (SCTEX) are victims of an "interagency" squabble between the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) and the Land Bank of the Philippines, a former top official of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) said yesterday.

Felicito Payumo, in a phone interview, said the farmers have already paid for the lands they obtained through the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law.

But Narciso Abaya, president of the BCDA, said he won't be pressured into paying for lands that have no clear titles.

"We risk (facing) cases from the Commission on Audit. We have to follow the rule of law (in acquiring right-of-way for government projects)," Abaya said in a phone interview in reaction to the demand for payments by Payumo on behalf of those farmers in Guadalupian, Barsaan.

Abaya said the BCDA has the money and is ready to pay when the farmers produce the certificate of full payment and release deed issued after mortgage from the Landbank.

Payumo, in a phone interview, said the original landowners filed a just compensation case that contested the acquisition price set by the Department of Agrarian Reform.

"The Landbank wants the BCDA to sign a deed of commitment that BCDA would pay (the bank) if the valuation determined by the court is higher than the acquisition price by the government. BCDA has not done so," said Payumo.

"So, it's a case of interagency squabble between lawyers of BCDA and Landbank. Caught in the grip of this gridlock are the farmers," he said in a statement.

He said the farmers have been waiting for payments for more than two years.

Abaya denied that the BCDA has already prepared a draft of the deed of commitment.

Payumo said it was Hot Chair, BCDA vice president for operations, who claimed that the draft has been sent to the Landbank, which a bank official denied.

Abaya said his agency has prepared a manager's check for the three parcels of land totaling 1.4 hectares. The BCDA Chief on organization was "Executive Order."

"The expropriation case was meant to break the impasse with the former owner of the land," Abaya said.

He said the titled bank, the land's former owner, was demanding just compensation.

"Let me categorically say that whatever amount the court decides, we are ready to (pay) even today," Abaya said in a separate statement.

No president of BCDA, I am on top of the situation, including the cases ... Hot Chair (SBMA) there was no leap so our quest be a candidate of this problem," he said. Tonette Orejas, Inquirer General Luzon

DOJ backs down from junking case vs poachers

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—THE DEPARTment of Justice yesterday ordered the provincial prosecutor here to suspend the withdrawal of cases filed against the 24 Chinese poachers caught off Mangsee Island in Balabac, Palawan last October.

The provincial prosecutor after these findings said he received the DOJ order in the middle of the hearing on a motion to withdraw the charges against the 20 Chinese poachers at the sala of Regional Trial Court Branch 52 Judge Bethlee Shoe.

Assistant Secretary Alberto Rodriguez of Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, ruled, on Jan. 22, ordered Rodriguez to file the motion to drop the cases against the Chinese poachers.

Rodriguez said he received the order from Prosecutor Benny Mendez, chief of staff of Gonzalez, through a text message and later through a mobile phone call.

The text message read in the court stated that the "provincial prosecutor should suspend motion to withdraw criminal informations pending the motion for reconsideration filed by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) in the DOJ."

Rodriguez the provincial prosecutor said the counsel of the Chinese 10 days within which to submit their positions.

Two counts of poaching and use of explosives and motion substance were filed against the Chinese whose boat yielded dynamited fish and live reef fish, which they were caught off Balabac, 273 km south of Puerto Princesa.

The DOJ order came as a total surprise to Rodriguez, who was expecting the "motion."

"It was a total surprise to us, we are not expecting it," he said after the hearing. Robert Bagalay, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Bishop, critic of gov't, dies

CAMIRA

BICOL CITY—BISHOP emeritus Gerardo Camiña, an outspoken critic of many governments and public policies, died of complications from liver cancer at the San Pedro Hospital in Davao City around 4 a.m. yesterday.

Camiña, 75, was the first bishop of Digos when it finally became a diocese in 1969.

Widely called Tatay by acquaintances, Camiña propelled the diocese into one of the most active units of the Catholic Church in the Philippines.

On Aug. 20, 1985, Camiña founded the Apostolic Daughters of Mary (ADM), a congregation of nuns doing what he loved most: Working with the poor.

ADM nurses figured in many humanitarian missions in the provinces and were very active in relief assistance during the onslaught of the El Niño phenomenon in 1998.

Sister Maria Delia Monteblina, ADM, said Camiña was to flyin Manila for a checkup on Jan. 29 but his condition got worsened.

He was brought to the San Pedro Hospital instead and died while being treated by his doctors. Elbert S. Aguirre, Inquirer Mindanao

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INQUIRER Visayas

Families rule Eastern Visayas politics

By Vicente S. Labro
Tacloban City

BLOOD IS THICKER THAN political relations, at least in Eastern Visayas where politics continues to be a family affair and nearly all of the opposing politicians belong to parties "friendly" with Malacañang.

Although prominent politicians in the region have yet to file their certificates of candidacy, the ongoing political posturing shows who will run in the May 14, 2007 elections.

The derby is match in in Leyte, where two political clans are at loggerheads over who will reign in the province for at least the next three years.

Two sisters of the Romualdezes and an in-law are gearing for public office in the first congressional district in a bid to continue the family political tradition in Leyte.

Young leaders lawyer Ferdinand Martin Romualdez, son of former Gov. Benjamin "Kokoy" Romualdez, who ruled Leyte for almost a decade during the reign of his brother-in-law President Ferdinand Marcos, has been visiting towns and attending gatherings in the past two months.

Martin, who was recently sworn in as director of President Macapagal Arroyo's Kalahiran ng Mahayong Pilipino Kampil, is said to be seeking the congressional seat of the first district Tolosa, Sta. Fe, Baybay, Tanauan, Tolosa, and Alangalang, San Miguel and Tacloban City.

He counts Governor Leyte Rep. Alfred Romualdez, is reportedly set on replacing his son, Tacloban Mayor Alfredo "Bejo" Romualdez, who is now on his third and last term, by running for city mayor.

Alfred had served as congressman of the first district from 1998 to 2001, after the nine-year term in Congress of his aunt, former first lady Imelda Romualdez Marcos, who had sought but later given way in the presidential race of 1998. However, he lost in his reelection bid in 2001 to broadcast journalist Ed Fabico.

Alfred's wife Christine Gonzalez Romualdez, herself a daughter of a prominent politician in San Juan, Metro Manila, is said to be seeking a seat in the city council.

The Romualdezes may eventually field a gubernatorial candidate from among their clan in the next weeks, Kokoy has been touring the province, trying to rebuild old political ties and talking with a new breed of politicians for a group.

But nobody seems to be sure whether the gubernatorial candidate, if the family would field one, would be Bejo, Kokoy Imelda or Kokoy's son Philip who, many believed, was groomed by his father to run for the governor before the 1986 Edsa Revolution arrested that dream.

BANNER lawyer Ferdinand Martin Romualdez

ALFRED, son of MP-ndo "Bejo" Romualdez

KOKOY Romualdez

LEYTE Rep. Remedios Petilla

Formidable foes

The formidable foes of the Romualdezes are those belonging to the Loreto-Petilla clan, a sub-group of the prominent Abiera clan. The Loreto-Petilla group has ruled the province for nearly 30 years, after toppling the Romualdezes who lost political power when the dictator Ferdinand Marcos and the Romualdezes were ousted in 1986.

In 1995, Remedios "Mario" Loreto Petilla replaced her husband, lawyer Leopoldo Petilla, who has been a governor and powerful figure behind the scenes since the gubernatorial race. Having been reelected twice, she stayed in the Capitol for nine consecutive years.

Due to the term limitations, she sought the congressional seat in the first district in 2004 and won.

Mario's son, Carlos Jericho or "Jeri," a political neophyte then, ran for governor under the banner of Lakas-NPC in 2004 and won. He defeated lawyer Sergio Apostol, then a three-term congressman and now the President's legal adviser.

Governor Petilla, who is seeking reelection, was recently sworn in as member of the Lakas-CMD, the political party of his mother and public relations officer.

Representative Jericho's sister, Rep. Carmen Loreto Cari (5th district), and nephews, provincial Board Member Carlo Loreto and Mayor Mayor Carlo Cari, are also expected to run for reelection or some post.

The Petilla empire, built over decades in power, seems to be a formidable political opponent. But some "cracks" may jeopardize their hopes of winning.

In the fourth district, two-term Rep. Eufrosino "Ensing" Codilla Jr. and his son, Ormoc City Mayor Eric Codilla, will be seeking reelection, while another son will reportedly run for mayor in Isabel, Leyte.

New alliances

In the past elections, the Petillas had supported the Lucilohuid-Loreto clan in Ormoc, which has blood relations to the Petillas through the Abiera lineage.

But since 2005, the Codillas have gotten the upper hand. Ensing reaches political-wise are now reportedly being eyed by the Romualdezes to support the latter's political plans.

In the second district, two-term Rep. Trinidad "Mitos" G. Apostol, wife of the presidential legal adviser, and daughter Mitos, the incumbent mayor of Carigara, town, are expected to seek reelection under the Lakas-CMD.

Despite having boosted the ligated party's arch in the past gubernatorial race, the Petillas are reportedly seeking an alliance with the Apostols, being party mates. But there seems to be a hitch, particularly in the selection of official candidates for mayor and other local posts as the two groups have their respective men and women to support.

On the other hand, the Romualdezes are also trying to have political ties with the Apostols. With the Romualdezes gaining ground in the first district and expecting a favorable political developments in the fourth district, the elections of the Apostols on who to support will make or break the Romualdezes' desire to field a gubernatorial candidate.

Elsewhere in the region, political clans are also calling the shots, whatever political parties they may belong.

PRESIDENTIAL legal adviser and former Rep. Sergio Apostol

NORTHERN Samar Gov. Raul Daza

For instance, in Southern Leyte, it has been reported that three-term Gov. Rosette T. Lerias would be replaced by her husband Vicente, while Rep. Roger Mercado would support the gubernatorial bid of his brother, then-acting Mayor City Mayor Jocelyn Mercado.

Lerias is with the Nacionalista People's Coalition while the Mercados are Lakas-CMD stalwarts in the province. Despite party differences, the Lerianos and the Mercados were political allies in past elections. At present, they are both allies of the President.

Governor Lerias, however, refused to talk about the present political situation, except by saying that negotiations were going on.

Political circles

Political negotiations are also going on in Northern Samar, where two third term governorship looking the congressional fief of his son, incumbent Board Member Paul Daza, while three-term Rep. Harlin Abayon is keen on running for governor.

Governor Daza, who defended then President Joseph Estrada in his impeachment trial, is the only known elected official in the region to be anti-Arroyo. He has been a three-term congressman of the first district and is in his second term as governor.

Representative Abayon, who was a three-term governor before he ran and won for three consecutive elections in the congressional seat in the first district, now reportedly wants his old post as Capitol. This means that he would be pitted against Daza if the lawyer seeks reelection. Daza reportedly wanted his son Paul to seek the post to be vacated by Abayon.

In Samar, however, no opposition is going on between Rep. Catalino Figueroa and Gov. Milagrosa T. Tan. Figueroa is said to be all set to run for reelection while his wife Soliprin will contest Tan's reelection bid.

But Tan wants her daughter Shaster Ann, a neophyte, to oppose Figueroa's reelection bid, another race for reelection at governor.

In Eastern Samar, three-term Rep. Marcelino Libanan (Lakas-CMD) will not be running for any position. He will field his wife Ebba as candidate for the lone congressional seat of the province.

Landing in Biliran

It seems that only the deputies of the absent governor of Biliran will not have strong opponents. The family patriarch, Representative Gerardo "Gerry" Espina, has ruled the province for more than a decade now. Before he ran for mayor in the capital town, he was a three-term congressman representing the lone district of the province.

Also holding political power are his sons, Rep. Gerardo Espina Jr., Gov. Rogelio Espina, and Mayor Rodolfo Espina of Kawayan town.

Amid the hullabaloos pervading the region, the fact remains that many of the people whom the politicians serve, at least women, are still living below poverty. But that is another story.

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Beermen, Kings near title clash

More Sports stories on A23 to 24

RACELA: A little spaciousness left

LOUELLA TABOSTOSA (Answers Delivered)
4:02 p.m. — Gridlock on Taft Ave.
5:20 p.m. — Just fled to San Miguel

By Francis Ochoa

SAN MIGUEL BEER PULLED off a crucial victory last night, storming away steadily from Red Bull with each passing quarter to forge a 111-82 rout in Game 5 of the Philippine Cup semifinal series at the Araneta Coliseum.

And it was with just little of the tour gunslinger coach Chot Reyes talked so often about.

Instead, it was mostly a throwback to the old San Miguel days of dominance. Ginebra, a lot of Manny Pacquiao and a little of Chris Gavina.

The result? A 3-2 edge in a fence-filled best-of-seven series that gave the Beermen home-court advantage in the race to one of two finals slot at either it expanded as the league's postseason tournament.

"Basketball is not really all about being physical," said Bonta, the long-time skipper of a highly-successful San Miguel team in the turn of the millennium. He proved his point with three triples in a solid third quarter run to give the Beermen control, 68-57, 6:08 to play before the break.

"Sometimes, you have to use a little of your mental strengths, a little quickness," said the veteran playmaker, who finished a lot of spring in a pair of 28-year-old legs that refused to quench its torch to his opponent Ian Vicente last night.

"There's still a little quickness left to use," he added.

There was a little bit of a throwback also in the second game. Down by three in the final 40 seconds of the match, Danny Ildefonso showed it still had it could invite-up-the spirit, pulling off two big steps on the way to updating 109-103 victory over Talk N Text.

The Kings also took a 3-2 series lead in their half of the semifinal bracket despite throwing more a 23-point first halftime.

"They made a great run and we really had to get it out in the end to pull this off," said Kings coach Jong Uichico. "But we never quit—up 500 despite coach were we concerned got some steps in the end."

Two free throws by Sunday Salvador sustained the deficit to a point and the Kings finally took the lead for good in transition after Asi Taulava rained a hook and Ildefonso tapped the ball to Jojay Helterbrand, who hit a stunning Mark Caguioa for a layup, 148-148, 17.7 wins remaining.

"They won Game 2 with a pick-and-roll and all Jimmy Alapag as ever had to be prepared for that in the last play," said Uichico.

And true enough, the Power Trio again went to the pick-and-roll that the Kings were prepared for and Alapag ended up finishing with the basket, leading to the error that sealed Ginebra's victory.

The scores:

First Game

SAN MIGUEL (99)—Ianga 15, Bonta 19, Arroyo 9, Caguioa 15, Pena 13, Ahmad 10, Dionisio 10, Fernandez 5, Lastimosa 2, Wilson 2, Ianga 0, Ingalo 0

RED BULL (82)—Ianga 12, Salvador 12, Vicente 10, Reavis 4, Alvarez 6, Cruz 5, Dimaio 6, Ramos 3, Pedrosa 3, Villanueva 2

Quarters: 25-35, 68-57, 94-82, 111-82

Second Game

GINEBRA (98)—Caguioa 19, Ildefonso 15, Helterbrand 13, Taulava 13, Reavis 8, Asilum 7, Ahmad 6, Ianga 5, Mercado 4, Asistores 2, Ingalo 0

TALK N TEXT (98)—Washington 25, Ildefonso 17, Cardona 16, Mamaril 10, Asilum 7, Alapag 10, Ildefonso 5, Del Rosario 0, Ildefonso 0, Ildefonso 0

Quarters: 26-20, 53-41, 87-82, 109-103

World Wide Fund warns of food shortage in RP

By Norman Bordadora

THE WORLD WIDE FUND FOR NATURE has warned that scarcity of fresh water could be one of the effects of global warming next to a country rich in natural resources like the Philippines.

"Food security is a real danger [as] 48 million Filipinos rely on the rain for food," WWF Philippines chief executive officer Lorenzo Tan said yesterday in a statement in anticipation of the fourth assessment report by International Panel on Climate Change.

"Coral bleaching, algal blooms and marine acidification brought about by global warming will definitely take its toll on our declining fisheries," he added.

Tan said serious concerns about freshwater resources would also affect the production of rice, a 10-percent drop.

"Rice too, might be in short supply (1 talon 4,700 liters of water or produce a kilo of rice. We face a drought this 2007. So are we, no rice. No rice, no food," he said.

Heavy toll

In a statement, WWF Philippines said climate change was already taking its toll on the country's resources as shown by the record super typhoons that hit the country toward the end of 2006.

"Last year alone, the country was subjected to a slew of destructive storms, floods and droughts. Material damage cut into the billions. The human toll was far greater. Disaster teams swept away thousands of homes in Davao Oriental, Misamis and the Visayas," the group said.

"Closer to the capital, Edsa's irrepressible billboards lay haphazard. And in our very own backyards, century-old trees were ripped apart. Currently the country experiences abnormal months or in the form of a cold spell," it added.

The bayanan yesterday reported that frost destroyed P59-million worth of vegetables in the Cordillera.

Global warming causes changes in the atmospheric patterns that lead to changes in weather patterns such as droughts, hurricanes and colder than usual temperatures.

Act without delay

"The government must take this opportunity to immediate and proactive action to avert the disturbing consequences of climate change. Mitigation is only one part of the equation. Adaptation response should be crafted and set in place without delay," said Rod Mapa, WWF climate change manager.

"Extreme weather is only a taste for future forecasts—it is happening here, now. If we are to make it through this with minimal damage to our country—our government must act now," he added.

Mapa said that instead of spending on repairs, the government should adopt a policy of prevention, "a proactive and strategic solution that can effectively deal with the increasing global temperatures caused by rising carbon dioxide levels in the environment."

DOOMSDAY BY CENTURY'S END

'Climate refugees' could reach 200M

PARIS—A DECADE OR SO AGO, GREENS coined the term "climate refugees" to describe the future victims of global warming.

Today experts say such refugees may already number in the millions and could reach 200 million by century's end, stoking tensions and potential for conflict.

They point to fresh communities literally uprooted by melting ice in North America and Greenland, the thirsty people around central Africa's fast-shrinking Lake Chad, and the tens of thousands displaced from New Orleans by hurricane Katrina.

In the future, these ranks could be swollen by refugees fleeing flooded homes, parched farmland or wrecked economies, from small island states in the Pacific to tropical Africa and the Mediterranean rim.

"The issue of environmental refugees promises to rank as one of the foremost human crises of our time," said Norman Myers, an Oxford University professor.

What constitutes a refugee can stoke emotional debate.

Critics of the term say it is a political-ly-charged statement, liable to lapse in inaccuracy.

Classic refugees, they argue, should not be confused with people who flee their homes because of ecological stress caused by over-population, pollution, abuse of freshwater or other acts of greed...[t]judgement or bad planning.

Katrina

In the case of Katrina, scientists acknowledge a single extreme weather event cannot by itself be pinned to a long-term phenomenon, although they also point out that warmer seas provide raw fuel to make hurricanes more devious.

But they also say that global warming is already magnifying environmental problems in many countries—and in the future, it will almost certainly help to push vulnerable communities over the edge.

"There is going to be a lot of population movements linked to climate," said Thomas Downing, director of the Stockholm Environment Institute in Oxford.

"Not all will be permanent refugees, but where you add climate to other factors that push people beyond the capacity to cope, the numbers will increase."

Forced migration

A Red Cross and Red Crescent study in 2000 said 25 million people had left their homes because of environmental stress, roughly as many as the refugees from armed conflict.

Myers, one of the leading experts on the link between climate change and forced migration, says the number could double by 2010 and reach as high as 200 million "mass global rearranging kicks in."

For fragile island nations such as Tuvalu, in the South Pacific and the Maldives in the Indian Ocean, global warming poses a triple threat.

Planners must spell a threat to the coral upon which islanders depend to attract back fish and tourists, decreasing rainfall threatens drinking water supplies, and higher sea levels pose a threat by waterflooding or inundation.

Bangladesh, densely populated flood plains of Bangladesh, facing seas still not only rule levelle regions but make the storm surges that periodically ravage the low-lying nation. AFP

UN report says global warming unstoppable

From page A1

Scientists do worry that world leaders would take that message in the wrong way and throw their hands up. Trenberth said. That would be wrong, he said. Instead, the scientists urged leaders to reduce emissions and also adapt to a uncertain world with colder weather.

"The point here is to highlight what will happen if we don't do something and what will happen if we do something," co-author Jonathan Overpeck at University of Arizona said. "I can tell if you will decide not to do something the impacts will be much larger than if we do something."

Trenberth said the world was paying more attention to scientists now than in previous warnings in 1990, 1995 and 2001. "The tension is more now," he said.

"Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, and rising global mean sea level," the report said.

The head of the panel, Indian climatologist Rajendra Pachauri, called it a "very impressive document that goes several steps beyond previous research."

A senior US government scientist, Susan Solomon, said the report was unbiased. "There can be no question that the increase in greenhouse gases is dominated by human activities."

The report said man-made emissions of greenhouse gases would already be trapping more heat even if there were no cold days, some nights, killer heat waves, floods and heavy rains, devastating droughts, and an increase in hurricane and tropical storm strength (particularly in the Atlantic Ocean).

Rising temperature

And if you think it is bad now, the harmful effects during the 21st century "would very likely be larger than those observed during the 20th century," the report said.

The IPCC's earlier temperature estimates ranged from between 1.8 Celsius to 4 C (3.2 F to 7.2 F) and sea levels increase 28 cm to 58 cm (11 inches to 23.2 inches) by 2100, the report concluded.

The scientists also predicted increasingly intense storms, heat waves and heavy rains in the decades to come.

The impact of pouring greenhouse gases into the atmosphere would cause serious climate disruptions. "In more than a millennium," the IPCC said.

Storms more intense

... Sea rises, the report notes, are predicted to shrink both the Arctic and Antarctic, and in some projections "Arctic late summer sea disappears almost entirely by the latter part of the 21st century."

"It is likely that that future tropical cyclones"—similar to the one that devastated New Orleans—"will become more intense, with large peak wind speeds and heavy precipitation," it said.

Environmental pressure groups responded to the report by calling for urgent international action to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

World crisis

Friends of the Earth said the world now faced a "crisis," and the WWF international conservation group said governments must now "think emissions." Greenpeace warned the "window for action is narrowing fast."

"The IPCC report confirms an extraordinary scientific consensus that climate change is already upon us and that human activities are the cause," said WWF International director general Jamison Leape.

"It is a clarion call to governments to act urgently to slash emissions," he added in a statement.

Jan Kuwaring, climate and energy campaigner for Friends of the Earth, said: "The IPCC report scientifically confirms the extent of this man-made crisis already hitting people around the world and makes bleak predictions for the future."

He added: "We can no longer afford to ignore growing and compelling warnings from the world's leading experts."

WWF and Friends of the Earth urged the UN Climate Change Conference next month, to take a leading role in international efforts to control greenhouse gas emissions.

Accordingly said EU leaders must order a 20-percent emissions reduction target "which would be just enough to avert the worst of climate change."

Lights out in Europe

On Thursday night, before the report was published, the lights went out at major tourist attractions across western Europe for five minutes, including the Eiffel Tower and Rome's Colosseum, in naturalist campaign to combat climate change.

The normally glittering nighttime view of France's most famous attraction was plunged into darkness if only for a few minutes as part of an environmental campaign and dubbed "five minutes' break for the planet."

WWF said governments must ensure that the next UN Climate Conference to Bali was a success. Stavo Stvoban, head of the WWF global climate change program, said it must set a "tight time frame for negotiating new cuts in emissions within a next Kyoto Agreement that will also promote clean investments." AFP AP

Macho nature blamed for Ebdane's short fuse

From page A1

newly installed Defense Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane Jr., and stressed that soldiers would not be tapped to guard ballots and election paraphernalia.

Ermita Cardina, defense undersecretary for civilian, retired and reserve affairs, said Ebdane had no intention of attending on Oct. 11 memorandum of agreement (MOA) between the DND and the Commission on Elections that bars soldiers from election duties.

"[Armed forces of the Philippines] units can be requested to act as escorts when police security is not enough, but they will not be the ones transporting [the ballots]," Cardina said.

Cardina sought out reporters to clarify Ebdane's remarks at his first press briefing as defense chief on Thursday, but he did not apologize for Ebdane's outburst during the briefing.

"He have different sensitivities. To some people, it's a serious situation. There are those who react fast," Cardina said.

Being Ilonggo

Garcon refuge you (That's how he says—macho," he said of Ebdane.

The two men are 1970 graduates of the Philippine Military Academy.

At the Villamor Air Base, where he was guest of honor at the turnover ceremony of the new Air Force communicating group, 1984 Gen. Roberto Tolentino, Ebdane himself said he had been a amuse the characteristics of the newer-tempered Ilonggos in his new post.

Ebdane said his flare up the other day was prompted by having to answer the same questions from the same reporters.

"I said, 'Why not read the MOA yourself?' It's probably in the manner of speaking. Let's just be like the Ilonggos—smiling even when angry," the no. five of Antidote told reporters in Hiligaynon.

Asked by the InQuirer if he was a hot-tempered man, Ebdane said he had learned to mellow down but that some incidents could do him.

"I've learned to be patient but sometimes the natural sufferer," he said.

Taking note of the chief prohibition in the MOA stating that military personnel are not supposed to handle ballots and election paraphernalia, Ebdane explained his statement about allowing the transport of ballot boxes using Air Force helicopters.

"What we are driving at is, in areas where there is no available transportation, the Comelec has authority, and that all depends on the decision of the AFP chief-of-staff," Ebdane said.

"Whatever the government or soldiers will do as decided by the Comelec and approved by the AFP chief of staff will be for a noble intention. Wating flong [to any ako [Nothing else]," he said, apparently referring to election fraud.

Minding his business

Ebdane brushed off criticisms heaped on his appointment, particularly on his alleged involvement in the "Hello Garci" election fraud scandal.

He said he would simply concentrate on his job, as much as his critics should focus on them: "Mind! Ko na ako pala [Mind your own business]."

Ebdane appeared in a good mood, almost smiling throughout the midweek interview.

But a little of the "macho" nature showed, after answering a series of questions, he quipped: "Ano pang gusto niyong sabihin? Yung mga [What other wrong things do you want me to say]?"

Shortly after he assumed his post on Feb. 1, Ebdane told reporters that he found nothing wrong if military planes would be used to transport ballots.

"Immediate, I'm always the Comelec who has the final say—like, for example, the number of the ballots from one province to another. They need the planes. So it is not included in the prohibition issued in the MOA," Ebdane said.

He had also said in a report when asked him how allowing troops to transport ballots would affect insulating the military from partisan activities.

"What's your problem?" he snapped, adding: "What's wrong if the Comelec will request the Air Force to transport the ballots from Luzon to Mindanao?"

'Out of context'

Cardina said Ebdane's statement on the MOA had been "taken out of context."

"No, no. It's clear in the MOA that the military is limited to providing escorts [when transporting ballots]. The Secretary is clear on that," he said.

Cardina said troops would not transport election paraphernalia except to "life and death situations" or when ordered by the Comelec.

Before, C-130 military cargo planes and other AFP vehicles and vessels were used to transport election paraphernalia and personnel.

"We don't want that anymore. That's prohibited [under the MOA]," Cardina said.

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Suspected kidnappers fall

1 killed in QC shootout; 4 others nabbed

By Julie M. Aurelio and Miko L. Morales

ONE SUSPECTED KIDNAPPER WAS KILLED and four others were arrested in Quezon City Thursday afternoon after a brief shootout with intelligence operatives.

Johnny "Jack" Devanera was killed in the shootout in front of the Sa-ot factory at the corner of Araneta Avenue and Roley Rivera Street, Quezon City.

The National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) presented yesterday to the media the arrested suspected members of the Victor Pirates group.

They were Raul Cumbia, alias Randy Sandoval, 35; Reynaldo Lleva, 34; Tito Lagnacin alias Diego Gallanio, 39; and Ruslit Pelletis, 27.

Supt. Magtanggol Gatdula, officer in charge of the Quezon City Police District, said the suspects were members of the Victor Pirates syndicate, which was involved in various crimes including kidnap-for-ransom, carnok and robbery.

Deputy Director for Criminal Investigation Sr. Supt. Jaime Ines said operatives also apprehended a tip that the group was planning to abduct a wealthy Chinese businessman.

At around 2 p.m. on Thursday, operatives were tailing the suspects' Honda Civic (plate number TPH 897) and a Isuzu Hilux (plate number SOS 799) when the alleged kidnappers opened fire.

One of the suspects said it was only Devanera who fired a weapon. The rest dropped to the ground when police chased in on them.

"Jack wanted to run away. He was the one who fired a gun. We did not hold any weapons," Lagnacin said. He added that he drove the Isuzu pick-up. Lagnacin said Jack he said was brought to Batangas from a certain Carmen.

"I was even surprised that Jack brought guns. Wala ang sabi ang ipa-sa akin, may kukuhaan kami," Lagnacin said. When asked if he knew what Devanera meant by "the job," Lagnacin said he did not have any idea.

Another suspect, Lleva, told the business he planned to go job-hunting that Thursday, but Devanera told him to go to Araneta Avenue that afternoon.

Lleva, a tricycle driver, said he met Devanera in Pleasantville near Ayala, where he heard him talk to Wesley "I decided to talk to him, after all he was my kababayan," Lleva, who is from Tarlac, said in Filipino. The two then exchanged text messages. The other suspects also claimed they only knew Devanera through certain contacts.

Lagnacin has jumped bail for a robbery-in band case in Dasmariñas, Cavite. Gatdula expected from the National Bilibid Prison in July while he negotiated to have Lagnacin hospitalized for medical treatment. Police are still investigating if Devanera had any pending criminal cases. It was unclear if he was the mastermind.

Meanwhile, charges of illegal possession of firearms and explosives, as well as violations of the Omnibus Election Code and Republic Act No. 6539 or Anti-Carnapping Act, will be filed against the suspects.

BAD FALL A crane recovers the delivery truck that fell into the Pasig River yesterday after its driver lost control of the wheel. (Story on Page A-18)

Pasay City riot could lead to court cases

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE POLITICAL BATTLE IN Pasay City may be moving to the courts again.

Dismissed Mayor Wenceslao "Peewee" Trinidad and Alan Peralejo, the city's vice chief executive, are both considering appealing Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo's decision to slap them with six months' suspension without pay for their alleged roles in the violent dispersal of a rally by Trinidad supporters in front of the Pasay City Hall on Thursday.

Trinidad, in a press conference yesterday, said his camp was thinking of filing charges against Peralejo, who, he said, ran away at the sight of the violence.

Trinidad and administrative officer Peralejo were already being prosecuted for allegedly inciting the violence.

Trinidad and administrative officer Peralejo were already being prosecuted against Southern Police District Director Senior Supt. Jaime Caringal, Pasay Deputy Director Supt. Carlos de Jesus and several unidentified barangay policemen for physical injuries and abuse of authority, said Trinidad.

Meanwhile, Peralejo said the city legal department was studying what cases to file against Trinidad, who many residents called a dictator and nicknamed him Ampatuan.

"We have to take legal action to stop them from doing these acts," he told the Inquirer yesterday.

The dismissed officials resigned to city hall Thursday morning hoping that the Department of Interior and Local Government would grant their request for reinstatement. But the DILG said the request had no legal basis.

The DILG said an amendment to the Ombudsman's rules of procedure allowed the enforcement of a dismissal order pending appeal. Trinidad said the DILG's position on the rule of procedure was applicable only to appointed government employees, not to a duly elected official like him.

Trinidad supporters hauled rocks, trash, bottles and dismantled steel railings when anti-riot policemen stopped city officials from entering the building.

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Governor

Truck falls into river

By Tarra Quismundo

POLICE ARE STILL LOOKING FOR the driver and two passengers of a delivery truck that plunged into the Pasig River early Friday morning. The accident held up traffic along 25 Road Street in Makati City, near the ship's unique decongestion.

Traffic investigator Insp. Oscar Hicaldo and public safety officers who arrived at the scene of the accident failed to find the passengers of a charcoal-loaded delivery truck that fell into the river past 7 a.m. yesterday.

Three were reports that the driver, whose identities are not yet known, were seen heading a taxi. "We tried looking for them in hospitals, but they were not there. Maybe they were not badly injured," said Hicaldo.

The truck was traveling eastbound from the Edsa to C5 Road when it swerved to another lane and rushed headlong toward a park by the Pasig River. The vehicle then crashed through the railings and fell into the river.

Corrupt judges' parade

THERE'S A REGIONAL TRIAL COURT judge in a city south of the Pasig River who is so corrupt that he extracts fruits both the ordinary and the abundant in a civil case. This judge eats millions in the civil cases brought before his court.

The judge demands money from a winning litigant before he issues a decision. And then he demands money from the losing litigant who files a motion for reconsideration.

His shameful activities are well-known among lawyers who defend or prosecute their cases in his sala.

A litigant, who won a favorable decision, rose to ungratefully fire double-crossing judge he looked for a brief letter to exasperate the magistrate. But the last-headed litigant was prevailed upon by his lawyers not to push through with his plan.

Don't be surprised if this two-faced judge is also dead one of these days.

* * *

Another judge in the same city south of the Pasig River is "religiously" corrupt. This judge starts his court sessions with a long prayer, followed by the reading of a passage from the Bible.

But what the--you know. This judge is like the first one I mentioned above. He also engages in "tagayang-bagos," which means "cutting both ways" or collecting from litigants on both sides of the issues.

This priest manque has his son be a carpenter. Anson collects the money from both litigants.

* * *

A former congressman has reportedly gone back to his old habits.

This congressman, whose looks could make the hearts of outspoken flutter, is often always late for sessions or absent from them.

The reason? A hangover from a get away he previous night.

To borrow the language of the colegiales "tagong the congressman, is pero pa-isa-isahin"

* * *

Let's give newly-installed Defense Secretary Hermogenes "Jun" Ebdane a chance to prove his worth.

He was a hard worker when he was Philippine National Police (PNP) chief and head of the PNP anti-kidnapping task force.

There's no hard evidence he was involved in the "Hello Garci" scandal.

What's worrying with Ebdane's ex-military man or policeman, like Ebdane, to the defense department, who haunts the security establishment inside out?

Would you rather have a civilian-coward holding the defense portfolio who would run away from a confrontation with armed rebel soldiers?

* * *

The fact that suspected terrorists who were arrested or killed by security forces in Mindanao had links to the Rajah Solaiman Liberation Front (RSLF) makes it a terrorist organization.

This column has been saying all along that the MILF and the Abu Sayyaf are one and the same group, contrary to government claims.

Of course, the government must part with the MILF chieftaining of the Abu Sayyaf so as not to jeopardize the peace talks with the insurgent group.

The fact is that the Abu Sayyaf is MILF's last command or dirty tricks department.

Let's not forget that the MILF is NOT synonymous and left innocent civilians (though the Abu Sayyaf, and still maintains a clear image in the eyes of the international community.

₱2.85M taken in Pasig heist

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THREE MOTORCYCLE-RIDING ROBBERS took at gunpoint yesterday afternoon ₱2.85 million in company money in Pasig City.

The daring robbery was the fifth in the city using the same modus operandi in only three months. Three robbers brandishing guns ran over cashiers who had just withdrawn big amounts from a bank.

Company driver Alvin Magdalena, 27, said he and fellow employee Jose Garcia, 42, had just withdrawn money at about 2:30 p.m. from the Equitable PCI Bank Branch on Shaw Boulevard and were on their way back to the head office of the ABB BA Export Business, an exporter of locally made gourmet items, in Mandaluyong City. The two were on board a green Mitsubishi Adventa.

While stuck in traffic on Shaw Boulevard corner Pioneer Street, two men armed with an old, handgun-like equivalent (the two said) approached the vehicle.

Magdalena said he was forced to open the glass window on his side after one of the men aimed his gun at him. Garcia said he was forced to get out of the vehicle. The robbers took the backpack filled with cash, got on a blue motorcycle driven by a third man, and fled. Garcia said he pulled the motorcycle did not have a plate number. He refused to tell investigators how much money was taken, but company manager Ramil Magdalena later told police ₱2.85 million was withdrawn.

MetroBriefs

Unkindest cut

A BARBER will face to spend 40 years in prison after a Manila court found her guilty in the murder of a teenager, nine years ago. Judge Victoria Marco of Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 49 handed down the sentence to Rhona Mercado of Barangay 20, Zone 2, Tondo. The court also ordered the accused to indemnify the heirs of the victim ₱50,000 in damages.

Ted Torres

Fake fish sauce

THE NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation raided a Caloocan City fish sauce or "patis" factory and arrested Twin Rivers Food Corp. of Regalado Avenue, Caloocan City early this week. Investigators discovered the firm was using cotton balls, wood and concrete to add flavor, aroma and consistency to their bottles and plastic containers.

Megan Corro

Hands off

THE LACKEY OF Navotas Association Inc. was so successful the Pandacan City government should go after their security guards who "encourage" motorists to avoid Quezon Avenue, Celso Reyes, LASFAI president, said the association has the right to issue stickers to motorists entering Tayuman Street and Sandoval Ave. Cruz as these are within the jurisdiction of the city.

Jocelyn R. Uy

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Guaso

71 killed in Iraq attacks

HILLA, IRAQ—AT LEAST 71 PEOPLE WERE killed in Iraq on Thursday as security officials reported that bitter sectarian attacks had claimed the lives of nearly 2,000 civilians throughout the country in January.

In sparsely populated southern Iraq, meanwhile, a gross contraction of 250 to 2,500 people—probably Kurds—was blown away near the border with Saudi Arabia, a provincial official told AFP.

A multi-car bombing group killed that at least 65 Shiite workers were killed and 20 kidnapped in the country in 2006, the most lethal year since the US-led invasion in March 2003.

Two suicide bombers killed 16 people and wounded 127 others they targeted the center of Hilla, the predominantly Shiite capital of Babil province south of Baghdad, security said nearby wounded.

Policemen tried to disarm the first bomber but could not stop two blasts which struck a crowded market, police officer Kazem al-Shamari said AFP.

The first bomb sent a panicked crowd fleeing in the direction of the second bombing, who then blew himself up, he added. More than 20 shops were destroyed in the blast.

In central Baghdad, six people died and 12 were wounded when an explosion ripped a bus apart on the main road in Karrada district, a security official said.

Another car bomb in the city centre left three people dead and seven wounded, he added.

Four more people died in other bomb and mortar attacks in the capital, and 39 bodies were also found in several districts.

To the south, officials discovered a mass grave in the province of Muthanna that held the bodies of 200 to 250 probably Kurdish prisoners, a provincial official said.

Aman Mohammed Amin said the grave was found west of the town of Salman, less than a kilometer (half a mile) from a former detention camp, thanks to information from inhabitants of the mainly deserted region.

The grave contained new more than 200 square meters (2,150 square feet) and included the bodies of men, women and children in Kurdish clothing, he added. AFP

High-tech combat tools

OBERGHAUSE, NEW MEXICO—In a mock raid on a fake village, the US Army unveiled parts of its high-tech Future Combat Systems, demonstrating equipment that aims to make soldiers' work safer.

The exercise was the first public glimpse of a series of camera-mounted robots, small unmanned planes, radios that can send text messages and other equipment that Army and defense officials say will make combat safer for US personnel.

As soldiers charged toward the Objective, they sent in a camera-mounted robot, called a SUO-V or small unmanned ground vehicle, to see what they were facing.

The images were relayed in real time to field commanders, who distributed them to forward soldiers. Meanwhile, the small unmanned aerial vehicles were also sent to the battlefield in real time.

Without this equipment, a US soldier would be injured or killed trying to gather the same information, Army commanders said.

Soldiers said the new tools, which include computer software that tracks the movements of US soldiers and the enemy, also help prevent dead by friendly fire incidents. AP

WORLDBRIEFS

San Francisco mayor 'deeply sorry' for affair

SAN FRANCISCO—San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom admitted on Thursday to having an affair with the wife of his former campaign manager, who quit a day earlier after confronting the up-and-coming Democrat and gay marriage advocate. "I am deeply sorry," Newsom told reporters, admitting the affair after The San Francisco Chronicle reported that Alex Tourk had resigned from Newsom's reelection campaign after his wife disclosed the romantic involvement. Reuters

US Senate votes hike in minimum wage

WASHINGTON—The US Senate has voted overwhelmingly to raise the federal minimum wage by the first time in nearly a decade, a major priority of new Democratic congressional leaders. Lawmakers voted 80 to 14 on Thursday to raise the wages rate by $2.10 per hour—from $5.15 an hour to $7.25. That means the annual salary for a full-time minimum-wage worker would rise from about $10,000 a year to about $15,000. The House approved a similar measure on Jan. 10, and the two bills will now have to be hammered out before going to the desk of President George W. Bush, to be signed into law. AFP

Putin promises democratic elections

MOSCOW—Russian President Vladimir Putin vowed Thursday that presidential elections next year will be fully democratic and fiercely defended Russia's energy policies, while maintaining international support for the controversial military campaign against Chechnya. Addressing an annual Kremlin press conference, Putin insisted that he would step down in 2008 at the end of his second term, as required by the constitution. He rejected suggestions that his endorsement would be decisively elected his March 2, 2008 poll, saying: "There won't be a divine successor—there will be candidates."

"The authorities' task is to ensure the democratic procedure of this election ... [so that citizens can make their choice," he said. Putin, who has been widely accused of stifling both democracy in Russia since taking over the Kremlin in 2000, refused to say whether he would like to see as his successor Dmitry Medvedev, analysts believe that Putin's preferred candidate. AFP

THE REMAINS of a painting destroyed during the Taliban regime seen at the National Gallery in Kabul, Afghanistan Jan. 9. A display case inclined on by under a stairwell on the ground floor contains the torn-up remains of hundreds of figurative artworks that were destroyed by the Taliban. AP

Afghan drug lord worked with US

WASHINGTON—By APRIL 2005, federal law enforcement officials summoned reporters to a Manhattan news conference to announce the capture of an Afghan drug lord and Taliban ally. While boasting that he was a big catch, the officials left out some publicity details, including why the Afghan, Haji Bashir Noorzai, had ridden secret by coming to New York.

Now, with Noorzai's case likely to come to trial this year, a fuller story about the American government's dealings with him is emerging.

Soon after the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, Noorzai agreed to cooperate with American officials, who hoped he could lead them to hidden Taliban weapons and leaders, according to interviews and former government officials and Noorzai's American lawyer. The relationship soured, but American officials tried to renew it in 2004.

A year later, Noorzai was secretly indicted and lured to New York, where he was arrested after nearly two weeks of talks with law enforcement and counterterrorism officials in a hotel.

In fighting the war on terrorism, government officials have often accepted deals with unsavory characters with questionable backgrounds. The government's shifting views of Noorzai parallels its evolving perspective on Afghanistan's heroin trade.

In the first years after the US invasion in late 2001, military and intelligence officials mostly chose to ignore opium production and instead dealt freely with warlords, including drug traffickers who provided information about members of the Taliban and al-Qaida or offered security in the chaotic countryside. But in more recent years, as poppy production has soared and financed a revived Taliban insurgency, the Americans have begun to take some more aggressive steps. NYT

6 Palestinians die; Gaza truce in jeopardy

GAZA CITY—AT LEAST SIX PALESTINIANS WERE killed on Thursday as new clashes threatened to destroy a three-day truce between warring factions Fatah and Hamas and shooting spread like wildfire through the Gaza Strip.

The deaths erupted outside the entrance to the Rimal and Shatati refugee camps in the heart of the territory where a presidential guardsman hoped to finish was shot dead when Hamas gunmen ambushed a supply convoy from Egypt.

The man was identified as 24-year-old Hamdan al-Mashallah from Fatah TV, loyal to Palestinian president and Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas.

Three more presidential guard members were killed in continued fighting in Nuseirat and altogether 70 people were wounded in Gaza, medical sources said.

A fifth Palestinian was killed in the northern town of Jabaliya where shooting broke out between Hamas militants and intelligence officers loyal to Fatah as violence spread elsewhere across the divided Gaza Strip.

Ahmed Abu Rizq, a member of Hamas's security forces, was killed in a gunbattle in Gaza City.

The Palestinian presidency in Ramallah in the West Bank blamed Hamas for the Gaza violence.

"The presidency strongly condemns the international and premeditated flare-up provoked by Hamas and its militiamen under lying pretexts," said presidency spokesperson Nabil Abu Rudeina in a statement late on Thursday.

The clashes were the worst violation yet of a tentative three-day truce between the rival factions. It began on Saturday after several days of deadly internecine Palestinian fighting left 35 people dead.

The presidential guard accused gunmen from the Islamist Hamas of storming the residence by using an improvised anti-tank rocket in a convoy from Egypt that was transporting arms and equipment for the presidential guard. AFP

Blair quizzed again over 'cash-for-honors'

LONDON—BRITISH PRIME Minister Tony Blair has been questioned by police for a second time over a "cash for honors" probe into Downing Street, officer said Thursday, extending his final months in office. The revelation came two days after a key Blair aide was re-arrested on suspicion of a covert up over the alleged illicit funding of his governing Labour Party.

Blair, who in December became the first serving British premier to be questioned by police, was interviewed again last week—once more as a witness rather than as a suspect, his office was quick to stress.

"Last Friday the prime minister was briefly interviewed by the police as a witness," said a Downing Street statement, adding that the questioning—which lasted less than an hour—was kept secret at the request of police.

Meanwhile, Lord Michael Levy, Blair's Middle East envoy and chief party fundraiser, was arrested Thursday for a second time in the probe.

Two weeks ago, another key figure close to Blair, Ruth Turner, director of government relations, was arrested Levy was arrested on suspicion of conspiracy to pervert the course of justice before being released on bail, while Turner was held on suspicion of breaching the Honours Act 1925 and perverting the course of justice.

Their arrests, as well as Blair's second round of questioning, have prompted speculation that the police investigation is snowballing towards a conclusion.

Blair's official spokesperson said it was "a matter entirely for police" whether he would be questioned again, adding that the prime minister had not been accompanied by a lawyer.

Elfyn Llwyd, leader of the Welsh nationalist party Plaid Cymru who was one of the lawmakers whose questions had prompted the probe, said he thought police would hand a file in the case to prosecutors within the next month.

"I believe there will be some charges and they will be very close to Downing Street ... this web actually finishes at 10 Downing Street," he told Sky News television.

Officers investigating the case requested a news blackout on the interviews, which took place during before Blair attended the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. This was only lifted Thursday.

In a brief statement, London's Metropolitan Police said that it had interviewed Blair again in "clarify points emerging from the ongoing investigation." Adding that he had "completed fully" the statement said that the meeting was kept secret "for operational reasons." The so-called "cash-for-honors" probe saw hundred last March and has seen that and his entire cabinet interviewed by detectives. AFP

SUPER BABY Antonia Vasconcelos, tagged "Super Tonia," is carried by a nurse as she is hospital in Carmen, Mexico, Feb. 1. At 2 schopping birth weight of 14.4 kg (31.5 pounds), measuring 50 cm (20 inches) in length, doctors say the baby drinks five ounces of milk every three hours. —

CHIRAC

Chirac forced to retract remarks on a nuclear Iran

PARIS—PRESIDENT JACQUES Chirac, seeking to limit the diplomatic tourists over his remarks on Iran's nuclear ambitions, reiterated Thursday that France is committed to preventing Iran from becoming a nuclear power.

The statement was issued within hours of the publication of an interview in which Chirac said that if Iran had one or two nuclear weapons, it would not pose a serious danger because the launching of such a weapon would lead to the immediate destruction of Tehran.

The president's office subsequently published a text of his comments as a "cherished campaign" and accused American news media outlets of "using any excuse to engage in France-bashing."

The remarks, made in an interview on Monday with The New York Times, The International Herald Tribune and Le Nouvel Observateur, a weekly magazine, differed starkly from standard French policy and from what Chirac has often said.

On Tuesday, Chirac summoned the same journalists back to Elysee Palace to retract many of his comments.

"France, along with the international community, cannot accept the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran," said a statement from his office issued Thursday.

Officials in Washington, Paris, the United States Embassy in Paris, Le Monde called Chirac's remarks on Iran a "radical turnaround" that comes in a bad moment" and argued that they also risked diminishing France's credibility on the international stage.

Several of France's main allies in the negotiations with Iran said Thursday, at least officially, that they were reassured by the press. Chirac's staff's corrections. ...

Reacting to the notion that a nuclear-armed Iran would not be highly dangerous, the British foreign secretary, Margaret Beckett, said, "It is not a sentiment I share. I don't think I understand what the French president doesn't share it surprises, either."

A German diplomat said he was confident that French policy on Iran was unchanged, while the Senate Democrat said it was understood that Chirac was the exact.

Less than three months before Chirac's second term expires, some French diplomats and privately that they were unconvinced that he could make unilateral diplomatic overtures to Tehran in an effort to strengthen his legacy.

Chirac's comments also made waves in the French presidential campaign.

The opposition Socialist Party was happy to smear the Iraq, not least because its candidate, Segolene Royal, was recently criticized over her stance on Iran. She had suggested that Iran should not even be given access to civilian nuclear energy.

"It is incomprehensible that a senior French politician could speak as if Iran already had a nuclear bomb," said Jack Lang, Royal's foreign policy adviser.

New York Times-Hews Service

02 • 03 • 07

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02 • 03 • 07

WHAT'S INSIDE

■ Wade generates Heat; Suns rally to eclipse Spurs /A23

SPORTS

■ Fisher pulls away; Woods 5 off /A23

Magada, Miñoza hound leaders

By Mycaug B. Cariño

AFTER OPENING UP WITH A WHIMPER, Filipino legend Frankie Miñoza made his move and put himself within striking distance of the leaders halfway through the 91st Philippine Open at Wack Wack yesterday.

LEADER: Chino's Liang Wenchong is lucky to save par on the punishing 17th hole.

RP Open 2nd round scores, 3rd round pairings A23

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SBP party to meet with top Fiba-Asia exec

SALAH. To compare notes with Fiba.

By Francis Ochoa

A FIVE-MAN PARTY COMPOSED OF TOP ranking officials of the bumbling Basketball Philippines will fly to Bangkok to meet tomorrow Fiba-Asia (Federation Internationale de Basketball Amateur) president Yadgar Salah Ibrahim Al-Hamad.

Before quitting for Bangkok, Thailand, the party headed by SBP president, and Task-force PBA chief Eddy Thiptipa, threw more panel members: Jaspan Cojuangco and SBP legal counsel Marvic Asistencio.

"This is our final push with the Fiba," Tolentino said. "We hope this will complete our report and, before we, told the Games Congress."

The SBP will hold the Unity Congress, a meeting composed of the major basketball stakeholders in the country on 9th, 3 of the Quezon Hotel.

The Basketball Association of the Philippines, the organization that is battling for SBP for the right to be the national federation of Joining Deoghbone, who is the boosting SBP president, and Task-over PBA chief Eddy Thiptipa, there main panel members Jaspan Cojuangco and SBP legal counsel Marvic Asistencio.

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The Basketball Association of the Philippines, the organization that is battling for SBP for the right to be the national federation of the sport in the country, has said it will not attend the congress.

The trip comes on the heels of reports that a BAP official has already flown to Thailand to talk with Fiba-Asia officials, who will be present there to witness the Unity Congress.

We don't mind," said Elizalde. "We are there to report only. It will be an opportunity for us to answer his questions. We will not be afraid to refute any of the claims of the BAP group that we have it in our country.

We really do, BAP, who has to explain why they are not attending the congress."

Salia and Co. are going to stay in Bangkok until Sunday and will also meet Fiba secretary general Patrick Baumann, who also chairs the Fiba's oversight committee.

Salia added that the SBP has already extended an invitation to Fiba officials, specifically Baumann, to attend this Unity Congress.

"We are the host nation so they are watching will run, until they. I, so I don't know if they can make it," Salia said. "Although Baumann still hasn't denied or accepted the invitation."

Salia also revealed that the SBP lawyers are all set to submit by last to case the BAP-Dee's temporary restraining order on the Unity Congress.

Toyota Otis, Hapee gun for 2-0 leads

FALLING a step behind a driving Dennis Otie of Toyota Otis, Harbour Centre's JC Intal grabs his tension during Thursday's game.

MAPEI-PCU AND TOYOTA OTIS, BLESSED with topnotch guards, will shoot for a commanding 2-0 lead in the PBL best-of-five semifinal series today.

James Canlas will be at the forefront of Hapee-PCU's assault versus Hidal and Mont at 2 p.m., while Marvin Cruz will try to silence Purefoods Old Reliable Center at 4 p.m.

Game 2 of the Silver Cup's Final Four action will be at The Arena in San Juan.

"He's really trying his best to lead the team," coach Boots Rosario said of Canlas' delivered workhorse brilliant all-around performance with 15 points, seven assists and five rebounds in Hapee-PCU's Game 1 triumph, 81-67.

Toyota Otis also gained the upper hand in the semifinal opener with a come-from-behind 84-77 triumph last Thursday.

"Our strength lies really here: our backcourt," said Tapales coach Louie Alas.

The Sparks need a 2-0 win in the last six minutes to steal the semifinal opener from the Port Masters. Cruz orchestrated the comeback to finish with 19 points, nine coming from the payoff period.

But Alas also credited his team's improved offensive rebounding and stifling defense in their last game rally.

"That was a good defense by (Patrick) Calubaq on JC Intal," noted Alas.

GAME STORY
(Purefoods Jam Sandwich)
1 p.m.—Hapee vs. Toyota
Mid-end Bees
(James Yap's leading scorer, 1-0)
vs.
Harbour Centre
(Angelo Alinsug's leading scorer, 1-0)

The Sparks held the Harbour Centre star scoreless in the last three quarters for a measly five-point production.

"We talked our plays in the last five minutes which was a mistake," admitted Port Masters assistant Bong Ceballos. "But the most important thing is how to hold what Electric (Cone) is doing on the court."

Calubaq contributed 11 points, including two triples in the final two minutes that boosted the Sparks' late surge.

Chronicles Cabagnot and Dennis Otie also contributed for 14 markers in the pivotal run.

Harbour Centre remained winless in three head-to-head encounters with Toyota Otis this conference.

Meanwhile, Mail and More's Jit Quiñabo remained to be a must-factor for the Chief stompers game. Last Thursday, the beefy center had only four charities to show after missing four attempts from the field.

The Tooth Masters forced the Camera to miss, out 31 turnovers, while limiting their foes to seven in only 14.

Jasmine M. Payo

Training center, village for RP sports heroes rising in Clark

By Jane Meneses

A TRAINING CENTER FOR OLYMPIC SPORTS and an exclusive village for athletes who reach the country proud will soon rise in Clark Field, Pampanga.

The Philippine Olympic Committee has already initiated exploratory talks with the Clark Development Corp. on the construction of the training center and village within the 1,500-hectare former United States Air Force base.

The Olympic Council of Asia had initially declared $100,000 (P5 million) to get the ambitious project off the ground.

"We will set up the master plan as soon as we get the necessary permits and documents," said POC chair Peping Cojuangco Jr. who visited the area last week.

Cojuangco and Clark development authorities have started sprucing up the baseball and football fields built by the Olympians.

Aside from the building of the Olympic training center and athletes' village, Cojuangco said the POC will also help provide livelihood to the families of athletes who will train for the Olympics.

"We will try to lure big companies to support this project," said Cojuangco. "This will provide the athletes a nerve-racking from distractions so that they could focus on their training."

Cojuangco said the project could start the moment the POC's contractor, Bulalon and Associates, identifies and makes the necessary surveys on the five-hectare area where the training center and village would rise.

Cojuangco also said Clark development authorities have started sprucing up the baseball and football fields built by the Olympians.

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By George, he'd gone ahead

By Percy D. Dela

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA—HE MAUTER indifference some pressure on Baguio radio. He reported the day's events with the calm assurance coming from his voice.

Remember you heard it first on DZRH," George Ichiyama reminded his listeners from inside the hermetically sealed Former Radio Mindanao Network studio on Session Road.

Ichiyama in those pre-martial law years was a Baguio institution of the "sound of the city" as DZRH stations established themselves there. He was the voice of the community in the summer capital and points north.

His style contrasted with those of his more famous and seasoned Manila colleagues—Edward Tiron, Hilton Alfaro and Nicias Rivera—sources of Broadcasting Star himself.

But by George! He held his own against the big guns. Ichiyama was a name to reckon with as a broadcaster. Besides, he dabbled as a print journalist known to string words in a sentence beautifully.

So was a damn good sportswriter who left this writer tongue-tied when I got outing the door. Just **that's getting ahead of the story.**

Anyway, I learned from a source report by Frank Cimatu of Inquirer Northern Luzon that George died of complications last month.

Only a few months back, Frank and this fellow, Alex Galang, were supposed to join Ichiyama while eating a glass with me at Some in Gordon Hts. Short list. This evening I was to be meeting about George and our batch of sportswriters.

I was remembering our rudimentary on a then luxury Instant Food, each time we were up in Baguio for the Town of Luzon and other sports events of note up there, which were many in our time.

Frank, gentleman George never played on the overlapping planned on the city's main drag. He watched in disbelief as we made fools of ourselves. His presence also ensured that our every beer did not turn the group's favored watering hole into a disaster area.

George remained with us in Baguio media gang until 1972, when he decided to try his luck in

COMMENTARY

Manila as a sportswriter of the Philippines Herald. He was among those people who stood next to orphan Cito Montilla, their getting ready to join the affluent school of the defunct Philippine Collegians.

In case you've been hiding under a rock, Montilla became a public personal and retired as spokesperson of the Philippine National Police, statement to the contrary.

Anyway, George's roads for Manila's position came well-recommended. Like the Asian sportsman of 1960s was also a sports editor of the Veteranian, the school paper of the University of Santo Tomas.

To make a long story short, George a bit older and wiser, got the nod of Bing Gonzalez, then the boss was herald sports editor.

The editor-boss pays? Well, they were prompt with the letter.

And the rest, as they say, was destiny.

With a stroke of luck, this writer joined the sports section of the old Manila Times shortly before it folded.

Less it. Boys were back scuttled.

The three of us were to be reunited at the Philippines News Agency when Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law.

In the years that ensued, George returned to Baguio as PNA bureau chief. His agents went back to Manila as bureau chief, editor and then was asked to the Middle East to become finance editor of the Saudi Gazette.

Les became a press aide of the late senator Ambrosio Padilla and a senior editor of the PNA, the Standard later asked me a working journalist and it now a regional circuit judge in his native Cebu.

I became a spectator for the Times-Journal and embarked on a desk shortcut in the PNA while covering sports and business when I could.

There I pestered on a chance to go to the Olympics and I started there for almost three decades. I retired early as a Caldecott-time gastrointestinal pulmonist in 2005. I return to Sacramento from the freeze on occasion to visit my children and work with the governor's small army of information officers.

Beyond, George, like me, became a professed talkless secretary here and various.

Mitis included.

Shin up against 100 top club golfers in Southern Ladies

ARCHIVA

CLOSE TO 100 OF THE COUNTRY'S FINEST club players are vowing action in the 44th domestic Southern Ladies golf tournament which gets going on Thursday at the Iloilo Golf and Country Club in Iloilo.

Defending champion Crystal Rafael from Davao will try to prolong her reign against the likes of Philippine amateur champion Carmelera Gilmore and amateur ranking number one Jennifer Jennifer, according to the organizing National Golf Association of the Philippines.

Meanwhile, Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Trenas, Chief Executive, president of IGCC Ladies Chapter, and Mark Herrera, IGCC vice president representing IGCC president Nicolas Cerezo, will be honorary divot on 8th, 3.

The traditional Lady tournament will be played in three rounds with a shotgun tee-off starting at 12:30 p.m. according to the Southern Ladies executive committee composed of Gil Quinsaloc, overall chair; Christine Pepe, tournament director; Carol Teng, Marivic Soriano, Maricris Cacho and Maggie Rivera.

Twenty-seven have registered. Aside from the Championship Flight, other divisions on tap are Classic A, B, C and D and seniors (50 and above).

Abadia stuns No. 2 Antigua

DUMAGUETE—ROOKIE MIRON (UPHSL) TEAMED sawit Larry Rodriguez, 4-0, 6-2, 10-3 to hang onto the quarterfinals of the boys' 18-under division in the football tag within 2000 Mike Arroyo Tennis Open and Regional Championships at the Central Luzon Capitol grounds. The other quarterfinalists in the 2000 members of the tournament organized by CSW were Francis Langas, who ousted Cyril Garcia, 6-1, 6-2; and Aaron Bautista, who edged Christopher Ogan, 7-5, 4-6, 6-4, in another pity. Bernardino Jake downed Montalbo, 6-2, 6-1; Jayson Garcia blasted Gerald Lachmann, 6-1, 6-0; Arriel Rey-ay routed Jose Guevarra, 6-0, 6-1; Jason Laurel Castro downed Carmelo Lachmann, 6-2, 7-5, 6-4. The other 18-under matches saw Ramon Fernando beat Jomar Cabrera, 6-3, 6-2; Carlo Ilagan routed Jomar Cabrera, 6-1, 6-0; John Bernardo beat Jose Mangubat, 6-3, 7-5; Eric Bautista beat Mark Arroyo, 6-4, 6-1; and Joseph Tan defeated Kaye Bugarin, 6-1, 6-1.

SPORTSWATCH

17-school Tagbad sagad caging starts

THE CELEBRITY WEEKEND BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT KICKS-OFF its second season today at the Multiplex Sports Park gym with a cast of teams from 17 schools. Defending champions San Beda Manila, last year's national qualifier Don Bosco Makati and regional finalists Christian International School and Don Bosco Mandaluyong are favored to battle for top honors in the tournament organized by Purefoods Corporation. Jun Valenzuela, together with tournament director Fernando "Mo" Bautista, coach of the San Beda high school squad, and organizer Richard Bautista. The event is open to 3 basketball sports boys 13 years old and younger.

THE HANDSOMAN AND THE 'HONGKUAN': Comedian Mr. Shooli, a.k.a. director Jun Urbano, tries on district posts as Ethan "Baby" Reyes during a match in the tournament "Putaero Marshfield Celebrity Football Tournament" at the Tuanfoo Restaurant in Greenhills, San Juan. Reyes lost to Guy Sarvice the finals of the tournament organized by the Pinoy Workers Welfare Foundation and sponsored by Sen. Miguel Zubiri, for the benefit of off-screen film workers.

US breeders join Makati Int'l Derby

POPULAR AMERICAN BREEDERS BILL MACKEY AND JENNIFER LEE of Oklahoma and Richard Kirk, of Alabama registered yesterday for the upcoming "Makati Business International Derby," set Feb 11, 1 and 18 at the Makati Jockey Club. Mackey and Kirk, who provided the grandparents to 2007 PCSO World Championship Cockers Derby champion Ang Pogi Ko, and Lee, a Filipina-American, will field their remaining Oklahoma-bred in Red Kirk to clinch another championship in the Philippines. In the event SEGA confirmed, the JP Dandoy Red Devils' and 4 of Kenya's and Pakistan's proud 13 entry, one three-and-two losses in 10 fights. Kirk, a gamefowl Pampanga breeder Efren Cunlan, arrived last Wednesday with 15 Golden Yellow thoroughbreds.

43 cockers show way in Baligon fights

THE THIRD ELIMINATION ROUND OF THE "FIRE UP" GAMEFOWL CLUB Cock Derby "classic-of-a-2-a-m" today at Pedigree Village Cockpit with 100 fights on tap and a guaranteed P1 million purse for the champion opponent. After two days of competition, 43 cockers in the three-round qualifiers will face each other, among them Ferdie Fore, Roger Paranjan, Medrico So, Ronald Bacordio, Ed Moreno, Miro Dee, Nonoy Singalot and Eric Miranda. Rosendo Ong, Baligon owner-Teddy Lagos, the event stakes a guaranteed purse of P1 million for each of the 43 cockers.

Las Piñas 3-cocker pits going today

AT 5 P.M. TODAY AT THE LAS PIÑAS CITY COCKPIT, THE FIRST OF THREE 3-cocker derby matches will be held, with Las Piñas Mayor Vergel Aguilar and Las Piñas Billboard Tonight To be hosted by Mayor Nino Aguilar and billboard manager Jim Tolosa, the event stakes P200,000 cash and three other derby matches. Each fight entrant will get 7% 300. Entries, with weight limits of 1.8 kilograms to 2 kilograms, must be committed until 2 p.m. today. For inquiries, please contact 0915-0961 or 0915-0962. Meanwhile, the Las Piñas Cockers' Association will hold its 19 1,000-cocking in the summer derby every 10 fights.

Wade generates Heat; Suns rally to eclipse Spurs

MIAMI—DWYANE WADE HAD 41 POINTS —including a team-record 24 points in the final quarter—and the Miami Heat came from 15 points down to beat the Cleveland Cavaliers 92-89 Thursday in a game that had some bizarre occurrences down the stretch.

With the Heat up 87-86 with 20.4 seconds left, Wade made a hard foul in the lane—contrary to his good friend LeBron James—who was called for a flagrant foul on Wade entitled to just one free throw. Wade made both free throws to push the lead to 89-86, then made one more after being fouled again 2.6 seconds later.

Wade had 13 rebounds, two more than his previous career-high set on Dec. 6, 2003 against Cleveland. Steven Edwards on sharing the Heat's reputation sooner 10 years ago: the Miami more than seemed he that by hosting 20 of 29 free throws.

James, bothered by a sprained right big toe, played 46 minutes and finished with 17 points, nine assists and six rebounds—but was 5-for-9 from the line and missed three free throws in a span of 57.2 seconds late in the game, including one that would have tied it with 43.6 seconds left.

Shaquille O'Neal had 16 points before fouling out, and Jason Kapono added 13 for Miami. Daniel Gibson had 19 points and Drew Gooden added 11 for Cleveland.

At Phoenix, All-Star Amare Stoudemire had 24 points and 20 rebounds, Leandro Barbosa scored 21 points and Phoenix rallied to beat San Antonio, 109-97.

Phoenix, which had its 17-game winning streak snapped in Milwaukee to on Monday, has won 10 straight at home and 18 of 19 overall.

Steve Nash scored 16 and Steve Nash added 12 points and 11 assists for the Suns, who raise for the third time in 13 regular-season meetings against the Spurs.

Alan Ginobili scored 32 points for the Spurs, who have lost two straight. Tim Duncan and Tony Parker each added 20 for San Antonio.

The Spurs took a 78-77 lead on Ginobili's 3-pointer with 8:09 to play. But Stoudemire soon drained on a layup for a three-point play and has been added a 3-pointer to give the Suns an 81-78 lead.

San Antonio closed to 85-84 when Parker hit a long jumper with 5:22 to go. But Diaw and Nash hit consecutive 3-pointers and Barbosa added his second 3-pointer to key a 13-3 run and give Phoenix ahead 99-89 with 2:22 remaining.

Earlier in the day Stoudemire, Nash and Shawn Marion were added to the All-Star team as reserves. AP

NBA SCOREBOARD

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	PCT	GB
Detroit	37	12	.755	—
Cleveland	32	16	.667	4½
Chicago	29	19	.604	7½
Miami	27	21	.563	9½
Toronto	26	22	.542	10½
New Jersey	25	23	.521	11½
Indiana	24	24	.500	12½
Washington	23	25	.479	13½
Orlando	22	25	.468	14
Philadelphia	21	26	.447	15
New York	20	27	.426	16
Milwaukee	19	28	.404	17
Atlanta	18	29	.383	18
Charlotte	16	31	.340	20
Boston	15	32	.319	21

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	PCT	GB
Dallas	36	13	.735	—
San Antonio	34	15	.694	2
Phoenix	33	16	.673	3
Utah	31	17	.646	4½
Golden State	30	18	.625	5½
Denver	28	20	.583	7½
Seattle	27	21	.563	8½
Portland	26	22	.542	9½
Memphis	25	23	.521	10½
Houston	24	24	.500	11½
Minnesota	23	25	.479	12½
Los Angeles Clippers	22	25	.468	13
Los Angeles Lakers	21	26	.447	14
Sacramento	20	27	.426	15
New Orleans	19	28	.404	16
Kansas City	18	29	.383	17

MIAMI Heat's Dwayne Wade passes the ball as he penetrates the Cleveland Cavaliers' defense.

Viloria gets title shot as WBC strips Nino of title

MEXICO CITY—THE WORLD BOXING COUNCIL declared the light flyweight champion belt up for grabs Thursday, stripping Mexico's Omar Nino of the title for refusing a rematch against Venezuelan challenger Edgar Jesus Luz Urgas.

American Brian Viloria, currently ranked first in the weight-class, will fight second-ranked Filipe Sosa of Mexico for the title, the WBC said.

The WBC said the winner will have to defend his title against the 20-year-old Nino.

"In light of the fact that the WBC believes that Nino did not voluntarily commit this infraction, and considering that his clean record has now been tainted by this event of circumstance ... we are declaring that Nino will be the challenger for whoever is the new champion," a WBC statement said.

Boxing regulators in the Ukranian of Nevada suspended Nino in December after he became the first fighter to test positive for marijuana metabolites in that state. Nino has denied using the drug.

Nino (24-2 with two draws) retained the 49-kilo (108-pound) title Nov. 18 with a majority draw over Viloria, the former champion. Nino first won the title with a unanimous decision over Viloria in August in Las Vegas. AP

Sharapova whitewashes Sugiyama, enters semis

TOKYO—WORLD NUMBER ONE Maria Sharapova hustled her way into the semifinals of the Pan Pacific Open with a 6-0, 6-0, 6-1 victory over Japan's Ai Sugiyama on Friday.

The 19-year-old Russian opponent dished a 5-1 lead to drop the first set but quickly recovered from the unfamiliar head to knock wide-smack Michael Jones to subsequently Sugiyama to be second.

Sharapova has dominated on court coaching as a gimmick but she only clicked into

SHARAPOVA

gear to her opening match against Serbia's Ana Ivanovic in between following an ear-hacking from Jones.

The double semifinal ranged tournamentation after dropping the first set to beat favourite Sugiyama, winning 12-of-the-next 13 games to advance to the last four in Tokyo.

Sharapova, Justine Henin, Serena Williams is the Australian Open finalist was the weakened, faces the winner of the all-Serbian clash between Ana Ivanovic and Ana Ivanovic in the semifinals. Reuters

Nash heads reserves

NEW YORK—TWICE MVP STEVE Nash, Dirk Nowitzki, Phoenix Suns shooting guard Shawn Marion and Houston Rockets forward Yao Ming were selected as reserves for the NBA's annual All-Star Game. They were among 14 players chosen by the coaches for the Feb. 18 showpiece to be held at Thomas & Mack Center in Las Vegas. Other reserves for the Western Conference team were Allen Iverson (Denver Nuggets), Chris Bosh and Dallas Mavericks Dirk Nowitzki, Tim Duncan and Tony Parker (San Antonio Spurs). The Eastern Conference reserves are Carmelo Anthony (Washington Wizards), Dwight Howard (Orlando Magic), Chauncey Billups and Richard Hamilton (Detroit Pistons), Jason Kidd and Vince Carter (New Jersey Nets) and Jermaine O'Neal (Indiana Pacers). Reuters

'Killer' Chavez takes on Diaz

CHAVEZ

EDGEWATER, FLORIDA—Mexico's Julio Cesar Chavez, whose ring career opponent died after receiving serious brain injuries in their fight, makes his return to the ring here today after a 14-month layoff.

Chavez, 42-3 with 30 knockouts, defends the International Boxing Federation lightweight crown he took from Javier Castillejo in 1998 against unbeaten American Jolin Diaz, 32-3 with 19 knockouts.

The pretty psyched to get back in the ring. It has been a long journey for me mentally and physically but I think I have done a pretty good job of recovery on both those issues," Chavez said.

"I'm ready to fight. I've had a phenomenal training camp. I'm so ready as I can be."

Chavez has not fought since the September 2006 bout that ended in tragedy. Johnson died four days after the fight, days after being stopped today 12th round by Chavez.

"I've been blessed with the Lumsdaine Johnson family. They have been very supportive of me and my continuation of my boxing career," Chavez said.

Chavez spent a month in therapy sessions but said the biggest thing to help him recover from the tragedy was attending Johnson's funeral and receiving the support of the late fighter's family. AP

FISHER: King for two days.

Fisher pulls away; Woods 5 off

DUBAI—RORY FISHER PULLED ANOTHER Dubai Desert Classic on Friday, grabbing the overall lead early into the second round.

The 26-year-old Londoner fired a second straight seven-under 65, leaving him on astonishing 14-under for the tournament at the halfway stage.

With half the field nearing completion in the second round, Fisher was enjoying a four-shot lead over the clubhouse over Graeme McDowell of Northern Ireland, with whom he had shared the first round lead.

Defending champion Tiger Woods kept the leaders firmly in his sights with five birdies for a 67 leaving him a further seven back.

The tall, long-hitting Englishman is playing full time on the European PGA Tour for only his second year, equaling his season in disappointing fashion by missing the cut in Abu Dhabi two weeks ago.

But a spell of cold weather practice back home at Wentworth has work scored out the flaws in his game and he has returned to his Golf Victorian swing fashion.

"I have only left a tournament once before in the 2005 China Open finished joint fourth and I haven't got over the hurdle so far but I feel so relaxed and comfortable here and hopefully I will learn," he said.

"I know deep down I am good enough and I feel it's one with my game and I know where I am going. I could shoot 65 again or even lower."

Spain's Miguel Angel Jimenez joined Woods on nine-under after a 68, with former winner Robert-Jan Derksen of the Netherlands a further stroke adrift after coming in with a 1hot 66.

Three-time Austrian winner Retief Ho of South Africa was among those that cut in the afternoon groupings after he confirmed his return to top form with a splendid 66 on Thursday. AFP

Magada, Miñoza hound leaders

From page A12

Magada's last victory came in 2004 at Saratoga in Singapore, Sind, where he battled the last seven holes in the final round.

"My primary aim coming into this round (after shooting 71 on Thursday) was just to make the cut and see what happen in the weekend," he added.

Rich takes in the first round a 141 with 3 from three of the local Filipino American Clay Jones (70), India's Digvijay Singh (72) and Philippine-based Canadian Rich Gibson, the 1999 champion who shot a 70.

American ace Jay Haas, who had a piece of the first round lead with Clay Jones, Villacrucian and three others, struggled across final five holes and ended for a 74 for 142, just ahead of Eddie Austin in the low amateur race.

Austin, the 36 year-old who has lived all of over the back journey marks for quite consecutive wins, showed out his version of a 68 for a 143 total, good for a share of 16th spot with illustrious, who battled in a 71, Gudar Lall (75), joint first round leader Prung Iri-chang of Thailand, 2006 champion Donald Berman (72), Thai Pongsi Monkaew (71) and veteran Mardukes (73).

Villacrucian, the 1983 SP Amateur champ, had a triple bogey 7 on No. 3, where he found himself in the wooded tangles, played it out of trouble, then hit a downhill approach that found the bogeys hunting he green.

Defending champion faces lineage of beatitude, added a 75 to an opening round 73 and, at 146, was a huge 11 shots off pace.

Antonio Lascuña, who qualified for the Asian Tour recently, carded with a 69 after shooting a 70 Thursday to share the weekend play with a 147 total like Angelo Que, who rattled off a level 72.

Biter Poezy was also on that group at 72 at place after a 75.

Former Asian No. 1 Thongchai Jaidee (No. 1 Thongchai Jaidee (70), C.K. Kim (72), and Edward Michaels, the American who won at Subic in 2003 who carded 152 after a second round 78.

The 30-year-old Lamy, whose last win was in the Asian Tour was a tie for fourth at the Barclays Singapore Open in 2005, also had eight birdies like Ishikawa but failed to turn in a lower score after taking three bogeys and a double bogey on No. 12.

The baby-faced native of Thongchai (28), who has an unorthodox, baseball style follow through, is fresh off a year ninth place finish with Thailand's Thongchai Jaidee in the Qatar Masters where he earned $16,666.

HARRIS Hilaya with fighters are Tsuneyo Wimbchurst at No. 18.

91st Philippine Open: Second round scores

T10—Lihwong (China) 69-73—142

T10—S. Bisht (Ind) 71-69—140
T10—S. Miyata (Jpn) 71-69—140
T10—T. Ishihara (Jpn) 67-73—140
T10—Y. Kawagishi (Jpn) 69-71—140
T10—K. Kawamoto (Jpn) 68-72—140

T15—C. Stevens (USA) 71-70—141
T15—Kim Chung-tae (Kor) 71-70—141
T15—P. Bhatt (Ind) 69-72—141
T15—K. Kim (Kor) 69-72—141

T19—C. Wu (Tpe) 71-71—142
T19—Kim Kyung-tae (Kor) 71-71—142
T19—Y. Kawagishi (Jpn) 69-73—142
T19—Y. Kawagishi (Jpn) 69-73—142
T19—Y. Kawagishi (Jpn) 69-73—142

T24—C. Villacrucian (Phi) 71-71—142
T24—Park Jin-Bo (Kor) 71-71—142
T24—Park Jin-Bo (Kor) 71-71—142
T24—Park Jin-Bo (Kor) 71-71—142

T28—Y. Kawagishi (Jpn) 69-73—142
T28—Y. Kawagishi (Jpn) 69-73—142
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T28—Y. Kawagishi (Jpn) 69-73—142

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T100—Y. Kawagishi (Jpn) 69-73—142
T100—Y. Kawagishi (Jpn) 69-73—142

PAIRINGS: Third round

7:15—A. Bibat, R. Pagunsan
7:25—J. Carmel, Ram Vel
7:35—C. Dam, A. Singh, J. Sabu
7:45—C. Manning, C. Rabadal, A. Fernandez
7:55—Hsieh Yi-Ta, S. Kumar, M. Sriram
8:05—S. Im, S. Jones, I. Sanchez
8:15—Lin Wei, Wongsuwan, S. Jaidee
8:25—Hsieh Min-Nan, S. Ishikawa, M. Perez
8:35—M. Ahmed, M. Siem, S. Ozaki
8:45—T. Lehman, S. Hell, S. Hwang
8:55—M. Brown, Lu Wei, S. Visser
9:05—M. Hall, S. Dela Rosa, C. Hall
9:15—S. Pagsin, R. Bisht, C. Singh Randhawa
9:25—S. Hamilton, Kim Kyung-tae, S. Hamilton
9:35—M. Domingo, Jun Hi, S. Hsieh
9:45—Kim Kyung-tae, S. Hsieh, M. Hsieh
9:55—M. Brown, Lu Wei, S. Visser
10:05—M. Hall, S. Dela Rosa, C. Hall
10:15—S. Pagsin, R. Bisht, C. Singh Randhawa
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9:35—M. Siem, S. Ozaki, S. Hamilton
9:45—T. Lehman, S. Hell, S. Hwang

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Five or six boxers, 4 jins to Olympics

By Mars Anthony Reyes

FIVE OR SIX FOR BOXING AND FOUR FOR taekwondo.

That's the number of athletes the country's top two sports with the brightest Olympic medal hope expect to field in the quest to finally win the Philippines' first gold medal in the Beijing Games next year.

Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines president Manny Lopez yesterday said he is looking at sending five or six boxers to the Olympics by way of the qualifying events.

Meanwhile, Philippine Taekwondo Association president Robert Aventajado said they would send the maximum number of four entries each country is allowed to field in the Olympics.

Both officials said during the ROTOP vs Kwayan yesterday that they would maximize their chances in the qualifying event.

The Filipino boxers have three chances to make it to Beijing as qualifiers will be held in Ukraine in November, the Philippines sometime in January or February, and Bangkok in June.

"We're very fortunate that we're given the chance to host one of the qualifiers," said Lopez, whose boxers penned the most successful in the last Asian Games with two gold and two bronze medals.

The boxing chief, however, is worried that the schedules of the qualifying are too close to the Thailand Southeast Asian Games, which is set early in December.

"We worry about whom to field in the Olympic qualifying and whom to send to Thailand since both events are only one week apart," said Lopez.

Amid gold winners Joan Tipon and Violito Payla and bronze medalists Josiebert Buambo and Hedley Castro are tipped to slight in the SEAG.

Aventajado refused to name understudies. Olympic bets, ruling all members of the ROTOP-ing pool from equal chances of making the team.

Nat'l Pro-Am team limit raised

ORGANIZERS OF THE HONDA BOSCO National Pro-Am have decided to breach the 150 limit of teams allowed to participate in the tournament.

"Due to the numerous requests from our players to be allowed entry into the Honda Bosco event, we will go beyond 150 teams this year," said retired commodore Danny Ilusorio.

Ilusorio, chairman of the organizing committee.

Last year's number of entries was 166, the highest since 1986. Corp. dean Ben Bueno revived the event in 2005 in cooperation with the National Golf Association of the Philippines.

"We are always glad to accommodate our guests and amateurs wishing to join us," said Bueno.

The Honda Manila Pro-Am, on Feb. 7, 10 at the historic Lunger in Silang, Cavite, offers a total pot of P1.7 million.

Gerard Custodio and JR Tanpinco are gunning for an unprecedented fourth straight crown in the tournament.

The Celebrity Pro-Am on Feb. 6 will make the Toyota Alta as a hole-in-one prize, courtesy of Toyota Motor Philippines Corp. through its first vice president for marketing, Danny Isla.

NCA Cocker of the Year race heats up

THE RACE FOR THE NATIONAL COCKFIT ASSOCIation (NCA) Cocker of the Year gets more interesting as the country's top sweepstakers battle it out in their group's upcoming derbies.

On Sunday, 46-cock battle the Pasay City Cockpit in the NCA Battle 1-Day-Derby to be hosted by Lando Tabios, JR Magsaysay, Rod Rodin Lee and Edgar Santos.

Another free-cocker sweepstakes Thursday at the

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Ranger 4x2 2.5L Trekker AT	₱1,006,000	₱201,200	₱19,000
Ranger 4x2 2.5L Trekker MT	₱941,000	₱188,200	₱18,000
Ranger 4x2 2.5L XL MT	₱715,000	₱143,000	₱13,000

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BUSINESS

Editor Raul G. Maralit ✦ Assistant Editor Carrie S. Nakamura

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BSP clears $600M in loans from China

Funds for Northrail project, Customs inspection program

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS HAS CLEARED TWO NEW official development assistance (ODA) loans worth $600 million to be provided by The Export Import Bank of China for the government's major infrastructure projects.

BSP sources said the policy-making Monetary Board approved during its Thursday's meeting a $500 million, long-term loan from China Eximbank to finance the first phase of the North Railway project and another $100-million term loan to boost the country's container inspection system.

The first phase of the North Railway project seeks to reconstruct and convert the existing 32.3-kilometer track from Caloocan to Malolos, Bulacan, into a double track. The implementing agency is the Philippine National Railways.

The groundbreaking for the first phase of the priority infrastructure project was held last Oct. 20. Based on the latest report by the Task Force on Infrastructure Monitoring headed by Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, the right of way for the railway project had been fully cleared and relocation of informal settlers almost complete.

Construction will start this April and the project will be completed by 2010. A memorandum of understanding had been signed between the Department of Finance and Exim Eximbank for the loan.

The second loan worth $100 million will finance the implementation of the Bureau of Customs' non-intrusive container inspection system project phase 2.

In a separate interview, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri said China Eximbank had committed to provide as much as $1 bil-

BSP CLEARS $6

POWERHOUSE CAST

President Macapagal-Arroyo shares a light moment with PNOC Energy Development Corp. CEO Paul Aquino (2nd from left) and senatorial candidates Mike Defensor and Rep. Miguel Zubiri during the commissioning ceremony of PNOC-EDC's Northern Negros Geothermal Power Plant in Bago City, Negros Occidental. /PNOCEDC

PNOC unit to develop Negros steam fields

By Abigail L. Ho

BAGO CITY, NEGROS OCCIDENTAL—The power-hungry Visayas grid, particularly the island of Negros, now has the potential to become energy self-sufficient as PNOC Energy Development Corp. (PNOC-EDC) pioneers geothermal power here will further add to the resources committed to 49 megawatt (MW) Northern Negros Geothermal Plant (NNGP) here.

In an interview on the sidelines of the plant's commissioning yesterday, Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said PNOC-EDC could further develop steam fields in Negros Occidental and Negros Oriental to encourage potential investors to come in and invest in generation facilities that could, in turn, harness the steam.

"Negros Island is now energy self-sufficient. It will just have to source spinning and cold reserves, most likely from Leyte. Negros now has the best chances in the country to achieve energy independence with the mentioned potential of geothermal, biomass and hydro," he told reporters.

He said PNOC-EDC could work on further developing steam potentials in Negros and could bid out steam supply contracts to interests interested in undertaking power generation projects in the area.

PNOC-EDC information officer Ireneo Boris said in a separate interview that apart from the NNGP, the same firm was pursuing the development of 20 MW of steam capacity in Bacolo and another 40 MW in Dauin, both in Negros Oriental.

The $16.5-million NNGP is seen as a "critical" installation in the Visayas grid since 3,490 MW of new capacity is needed to meet this year's projected peak demand of 1,21.4 MW.

Negros Island alone has a peak de-

PNOC U

Gov't saves ₱48B due to lower interest rates, debt swaps

By Michelle V. Rama

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT SAVED P48 billion in 2006 by having to pay less in interest on its liabilities and by undertaking debt swaps, National Treasurer Omar Cruz reported.

He said that P30 billion of the P48 billion in savings were due to the drop in interest rates. He attributed the interest rate decline, marked by the recent fall of the benchmark 91-day treasury bill rate to an all-time low of 2.1 percent, to the government's improving fiscal position.

Under the 2006 budget of the government, the average treasury bill rate assumption was between 6.4 and 6.5 percent. But Cruz noted that the actual average treasury bill rate stood at only 5 percent.

The government's declining budget deficit also allowed it to reduce its borrowing requirements and cut the volume of government paper that it issued. The drop in the supply of government securities, which came with a high level of market liquidity, naturally resulted in the drop in interest rates.

The improving fiscal position of the government likewise boosted confidence of investors on its ability to service its debts, paving to lower risk premiums on treasury bills and bonds.

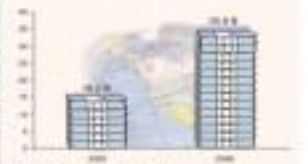
Aside from the lower than programmed interest rate, Cruz said the appreciation of the peso also allowed the government to reduce its interest payments. A stronger peso lowers the value of the government's dollar-denominated debts.

The peso was assessed to average at 52.51 in 2006 while the budget projection was 56.00. But due to huge dollar inflows from a strong exports performance and the millions of Filipinos working abroad, and growth in

GOV'T SA

INQUIRER MONITOR

Total FDIs up by 121.1 percent at P35.8 B (3rd quarter 2006, in billion pesos)



SB Corp. raises loan target to ₱5B

DTI unit to share fruits of its effort in sourcing funds abroad

By Roxanne P. Domingo

STATE AGENCY SMALL BUSINESS Guarantee and Financing Corp. yesterday said it would increase this year its loans to micro, small and mid-sized enterprises by about 20 percent to ₱4.5 billion.

Profits in funds hooked up to offshore development assistance loans, SBCorp plans to use what it "is for the biggest and most ambitious loan origination target."

The loan figure is ₱1.1 billion more than the ₱3.4 billion loans it released in 2006.

Of the total loans planned for 2007, ₱1.2 billion is projected to be released under SBCorp.'s wholesale lending program; ₱700 million through the retail lending programs; ₱600 million under the microfinance program; and ₱100 million under the credit guarantee program.

SB Corp. president and chief operating officer Benel Lopez said the infusion of fresh funds from three international lending institutions gave the firm the confidence to adopt more ambitious strategies to increase its lending to MSMEs.

Lopez said the company in 2004 started its aggressive fund sourcing campaign abroad and, as the Gibraltar firm successfully negotiated $30-million loan agreements with the Asian Development Bank, Germany's GTZ, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, whichis part of the United Nations.

Lopez said SBCorp. raised a cumulative ₱5 billion in funds from these organizations. The ADB has pledged to release $25 million, while IFAD earmarked $14 million. IFAD's loan is marked $15 million for SBCorp.

"This is the direct 2006 loans. SB Corp. is now in a better position to increase its loan original targets and become a significant player in the SME financing market," Lopez said. "Most result of our successful fund sourcing campaign, we intend to be more aggressive next year in expanding our line of credit and services to SME lending.

A government financial institution attached to the Department of Trade and Industry, SB Corp. has loan partnership agreements with at least 71 accredited financial institutions comprised of rural banks, cooperatives, non-government organizations and people organizations, thrift banks and private lending institutions.

MWCI's income up; ₱4-B capex set

PUBLICLY LISTED MANILA WATER Co. Inc. reported higher earnings for last year driven by continued efforts of stronger revenues and greater efficiency in its water distribution concession.

In a briefing, the Ayala-owned firm revealed a 1.8-percent hike in its 2006 net income to ₱2.34 billion from only ₱2.31 billion in the previous year.

Revenues, meanwhile, reached ₱6.84 billion last year representing a 17-percent increase over the ₱5.84-billion reported at the end of 2005.

"The solid basis in performance is a combined result of the company's continuous operating efficiency improvements and maximizing of both to provide better water and wastewater services to its customers, the firm said.

Manila Water president Antonio T. Aquino also said that the improved income was a result of the firm's ₱4.8 billion capital investments in 2006.

"The foreign exchange rate [currently to ₱51 billion since 1997," Aquino said. "We expect to continue the same level of investments in the coming years. In 2007, we have earmarked more than ₱4 billion for projects that will allow us to sustain our network operations."

The firm expects the water concessionaires three-decades-old asset base after government privatization in service in 2007. To date, it serves approximately 670,000 households in its areas of responsibility — translating that is into only a lower billion in an average of 200,000 per year.

More significantly, however, Manila Water boasted that it achieved "new record highs" in its operating performance in 2006.

Water supplied hit an all-time high of 948 million liters per day as of year-end — a 10-percent growth over the past year's level, and the highest over the past five years.

Water availability has improved, with 96 percent hour before it was connected to the central distribution system running 24 hour water supply. Jerome L. Kahn

Market bullish on FLI, says UBS

By Dexter L. Lacuna

STRONG MARKET DEMAND for Filinvest Land Inc.'s recent share sale reveals foreign investors' bullishness over the prospects of the firm and the entire local real estate market, an analyst said in a report yesterday.

In a press briefing, Eliot Grant country representative James Hays II said that Banco of PLDT stood work after were willing to pay a higher price — and a smaller discount to the market price — for the ₱5.4 billion shares being sold.

The property developer raised ₱5.92 billion from its sale of the common shares at ₱1.60 apiece.

"The represents a 1.22-percent discount to the market, and a 0.74-percent discount to the 10-day weighted average price," Baja said. "This is incredibly tight."

UBS Investment Bank acted as the issue's international underwriter, while its parent firm UBS AG, has been appointed as "clearing agent," authorized to buy back over 600 million shares if its threshold rate of ₱1.60 each — a measure that effectively buttresses FLI's stock price since the new shares flood the market.

Having pitched the stock to its clients abroad, UBS wants to help ensure the market's positive mood, most toward the FLI issue.

Hays also pointed out that international investors grouped up the shares as offer ahead of schedule, with the order book being filled up in six out of the 10-day selling period.

He added that the issue sets the tone for other upcoming property offerings, "over 1000 million worth of the asset."

UBS Securities (Phils.) research head Jody Santiago said that the interest shown by foreign investors in the FLI issue bodes well for both for the firm and the broader property market.

"There is a lot of interest in the property sector," he said. "Real wants [are] positive on our macro economy."

The positive mood, he said, means that more capital is being made available to buyers and developers in the property sector.

"FLI is well positioned to exploit [the] market," he said, noting the company's demand in the mid-end to market is happening across-the-board by the firm's product lines, which range from the subsidized to mid-priced housing units.

Santiago forecasts that the offering will be used to finance FLI's developments projects in 2007.

The total consolidated assets of FLI as of Sept. 30, 2006 stood at ₱46.9 billion.

2GO sees Ro-Ro boom

SETTING A BRISK IN DEMAND for its fastest, fleet-of Quicksea service, Manila Transport Services (MTS) said it also has decided to expand the service over the next five years, company officials said.

Under 2GO Ro-Ro system, the company's trucks go to the clients' warehouses or factory to load their cargoes and bring the country to pick up cargo. The trucks takes the cargo straight to the receiving branch or store, enclosed a Ro-Ro vessel.

Since launching its Ro-Ro system in mid-2006, the line doubled its container volumes over sea, said Mike Cansdale, senior vice president and COO of 2GO Solutions.

2GO also noted a 110 percent increase in the number of 2GO Ro-Ro Sealed from 2005 to 2006, as well as 68 percent more in quarter of the same period.

Edna Alcedo, president and CEO of 2GO Express, attributed the surge to the simplicity and savings offered under the service.

"Clients are sure US cargo in the truck. Road supply chain using container chain, and not three-step with the Ro-Ro (system)," he said. "The clients can send and receive cargo as if it was being transported, no delay in the port. There is no need to unload, pile on the boat, take off at the port, then drive to the road destination. That's why 2Go calls it 'driving through water.'"

Another feature of 2Go's Ro-Ro system is the cargo is secure by the owners are Jobless, Media, Universal Robina Corp. and Robinsons Ding.

2Go would to ships up 13 more ships out for the year, he added.

By end of this company's fleet of 2008 will be comprising up to 100 container ships into Ro-Ro vessels. Elan P. Dela Rosa

Ship firms stick to double-hull deadline

By Riza T. Dalvadores

LOCAL SHIPPING GROUPS STILL keep their commitment to replace all their cargo tankers with double-hull cases by April 2008, to effect of the disastrous Solar-ta-Bay (Mindoro) said.

"I have met with Pan Philippine International Shipping owners-level, Philpetro (Philippine Petroleum Sea Transport Industry Association) and Interphil (Association of Tanker Operators of the Philippines), and they have all reaffirmed their commitment to meet the 2008 deadline," said Emerson M. Lorenzo, head of Marina's Shipping Regulations Office.

He said the deadline has triggered increased demand to new buildings.

Each vessel with an extra hull that has a life ranging from 25-30 years (depending on care) to 3,750 deadweight at around $1.8 million to $2 million.

"There are currently no available second-hand double-hull tankers to meet the less-than-ready shipping firms are fully booked with orders," Lorenzo said.

Local shipyards currently do not have the technology and facilities to make such vessels. But many have begun remodelling to with foreign shipyards to be able to cope with demand, Lorenzo said.

The Inquirer has reported that the Shipyard Association of Cebu (SAC) has tied up with the Netherlands' Damen Shipyards Group to be able to make four double-hull tank cargo barges by 2008.

SAC president Arthur Uy, who owned Cebu-based Colorado Shipyard Corp., told the Inquirer that the group has received orders for double hull barges with the option and deadweight of 3,700 to 14 months from the time of order.

BSP clears $600M in loans from China

From page B1

loan to commercial loans to the Philippines each year for the next three years.

But said Inquirer that the government's infrastructure program was no longer a problem as the authorities would only have to identify the projects prior to implementation.

At the core China's interest in the country is ongoing, he said. China could soon exceed Japan as the country's biggest bilateral donor.

Japan currently provides about 16 billion worth of ODA to the country.

Aside from Qian Bambinh, Hu said China was a much bigger bank in China—China Development Bank—which the country could tap for its infrastructure banking requirements.

"The discussions with China Development Bank is not yet too advanced but it's another area we can explore," he said.

But while confidence among the global donor community was high, Hu said the Philippines must still be conscious about its foreign borrowing and increasingly shift to domestic sources to fund its development.

From page B1

Shares . . .

meeting between 3,334.29 and 3,278.88.

The broader all-share index rose 16.35 points to 1,968.10.

There were 75 gainers and 36 losers with 56 stocks unchanged. Volume totaled 1.31 billion shares worth ₱695.39 billion.

"The uptrend continued thanks to a more economic outlook this year. We believe the market will continue to move higher, and we have a target of 3,600 points for the month to short-to-mid," said Ben Rodrigo of Citi capital Securities.

"The way the market is moving, our target is quite conservative."

Among the index movers, GI Investments Corp. rose ₱22.50 to ₱393.50 while Ayala Corp. was up ₱28.0 at ₱800.

Top-traded Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co. extended its rally, gaining another 50 to ₱62.50.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. fell ₱50 to ₱2,870.

Retail and beverages firm San Miguel Corp.'s A-shares advanced 5.0 centavos to ₱64 while B-shares rose a penny to ₱75.

Gov't saves ₱48B . . .

From page B1

foreign investments, the peso breached the 49-to-a-dollar barrier to close in the 48 level for the first time since 1997 at 48.95 as of the end of the year.

The remaining ₱45 billion of the ₱48 billion in savings was a result of the debt swap undertaken by the Bureau of the Treasury last week on behalf of the government.

Debt swap is an activity wherein the government borrowed at a lower interest rate and used the proceeds to pay for an older and more expensive debt.

The lower-than-programmed amount of interest payments freed up some funds for other government expenditures.

The government had been allotting about a third of its annual budget for interest payments alone, leaving insufficient room for other spending programs like infrastructure.

Fiscal authorities, however, said debt servicing was expected to decline further in the government's improving budget position.

The government's budget deficit settled at only ₱62.2 billion in 2006, much lower than the ₱146.8 billion recorded in 2005 and was the lowest in eight years.

PNOC unit to . . .

From page B1

started of 200 MW, but it dependable capacity of only 180 MW.

With the new plant now running, Iloilo and Negros would be able to address its 25-MW supply deficit.

The new plant will provide electricity to some 400,000 households through electric cooperatives such as the Iloilo Electric Cooperative Inc. (ILECO) and the Visayan Electric Co. Inc (VECO).

Power generated by the plant will be distributed using a 25-kilometer line leading to the National Transmission Corp.'s Himalaya grid substation.

PHILIP S. PHOLCO's first wholly owned power-generation facility, PNOC-EDC now has five geothermal production fields, including those in Iloilo, Southern Negros, Biliran and Northern Cebu.

The new firm is the country's biggest geothermal energy producer with an installed capacity of 1,190 MW.

Fed rate cut? Investors spy inflation in bot assets

NEW YORK—FEDERAL RESERVE chair Ben Bernanke and his colleagues signaled last Wednesday that they were not necessarily done with inflation concerns, but that does not necessarily imply interest rate increases.

While the price of gold, gains for grains and currencies may be relatively contained, a growing chorus of economists and investors are observing that gains in those assets is telling a different story.

In fact, asset prices, from the Dow Jones Industrials Average to high-yield "junk" bonds, have climbed unquestionably recently.

Both prices and yields...

It's cash and The Dow: selling another record up Thursday at 12,867.01, not the Russell 2000 index of small companies keeping pace with a fresh like-time high record at 697.12.

Last week, the average spread on JS junk bonds over safe haven JS Treasuries fell to 275 basis points, the tightest since July 29, 1997, according to Merrill Lynch.

Looking further afield, emerging market debt spreads over US Treasury bonds hit a record low of 146 basis points the previous week, according to JP Morgan EMBI+ index.

Bradley portion of the index, so so reached to all-time low as it narrowed 7 basis points to 186 basis points.

All of which suggests that, despite the lagged effects of interest rate rises, there is still a glut of liquidity in the financial system.

"This has got to be reassuring to the Fed's thinking—and a very good reason for policy makers not to raise rates from here," said Mark Zandi, chief economist of Moody's Economy.com in West Chester, Pennsylvania.

Historically low bond yields have fueled a far-worse hunt for higher returns, and riskier ways, risk credit spreads still tighter, but historically low bond yields also suggest investors are underpricing risk.

This is "not necessarily unreasonable" for global financial markets, European Central Bank President Jean-Claude Trichet warned last weekend at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Even the manager of the world's largest bond fund is worried.

Bill Gross, chief investment officer at Pacific Investment Management Co., told Reuters this week that "The Fed is focused not on inflation as they loudly proclaim—that battle is being won—but on risk assets and will ease."

On Wednesday, the Fed's policy-setting Open Market Committee voted unanimously to keep benchmark rates at 5.25 percent for a fifth consecutive meeting.

In its statement announcing the decision, policy makers expressed growing confidence that inflation was sinking lower, even though economic growth was "somewhat better" than officials had expected just a few months ago.

But the Fed's confident tone on inflation appears more aware, more when looking at inflation in asset prices.

There days, liquidity that normally would flow into emerging of good and services has been diverted partially to financial market consumption, and from homesteads, chief investment officer at Christchurch Financial LLC in Princeton, N.J. Bloomberg

A BRA station associated with the Barisa New Oil Initiative opened last Thursday in Dundee, Natl. The group's objective is to encourage Americans to buy gasoline that originated from countries that do not finance terrorism.

Asian shares record peaks

SINGAPORE—ASIA SHARES RACED higher on Friday, with Japan's Nikkei hitting a six-year peak and record highs in down-tile, India and Singapore, as optimism grows about corporate earnings and the strength of demand for Asian goods.

Tech stocks such as Samsung Electronics Co. surged after data showed a solid rise in US consumer spending—good news for the exporters that power many Asian economies. Property stocks led gains in Japan and Hong Kong.

The rallies in key stocks moving the previous day's losses, as investors awaited monthly US jobs data due later on Friday and looked out for more comments on the week just before a group of seven meeting of rich countries' finance ministers next week.

Tokyo's Nikkei rose 0.2 percent to at last close in 15 months, after earlier hitting its highest level since July 2000.

MSCI's broadest index of shares elsewhere in Asia was up 1.3 percent

Nikkei at 6-yr high; India, Australia up

by early yesterday afternoon

Israel's benchmark index was the biggest gainer among major Asian markets, rising 2.2 percent to its highest close in a month, led by banks such as Bankers Bank.

Australia's main stocks benchmark rose 0.3 percent to its second successive record close and cushions in Singapore and India hit record intraday highs.

Taiwan shares rose 1 percent on gains for tech suppliers such as electronics parts maker Hon Hai. Hong Kong's Hang Seng was up 1.5 percent.

But Chinese stocks bucked the trend, with Shanghai's main index dropping 3.1 percent amid concerns the authorities want to cool a stocks rally that soared 130 percent during 2006.

The dollar was little changed around 120.70 yen, after dipping the previous day when data showed US manufacturing activity unexpectedly contracted in month.

The euro dipped a touch to around 157.17 yen, holding off the peak of 158.02 yen struck last week. Against the dollar, the euro was flat at $1.3020.

Japan's low rates—at just 0.25 percent compared with 5.25 percent in the Europe and 5.25 percent in the United States—have encouraged market players to borrow yen for funds to buy higher-yielding currencies in the so-called CARRY TRADE.

Japanese investors have also sought better returns in higher-yielding foreign assets, leading to a large outflow of cash from the country Reuters

Crude oil prices firmer in Asia

SINGAPORE—OIL PRICES WERE FIRMER IN Asian trade yesterday as Opec's planned February production cut took effect and the market focused on the cold winter weather in the United States, dealers said.

Early yesterday afternoon, New York's main oil futures contract, light sweet crude for delivery in March, was up 22 cents to $57.52 from $57.30 dollars a barrel.

Victor Shum, senior principal at energy consultancy Purvin and Gertz in Singapore, said market sentiment has shifted toward higher oil prices.

"Opec's announced production cuts have also started and Saudi Arabia said that they will do what's short of reducing supply."

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, meeting in Nigeria in December, decided to cut production by 500,000 barrels per day (bpd) from Feb. 1, following a cut of 1.2 million bpd in November.

"On the supply and demand fundamentals front, the market is tightening ... Opec is cutting supply. Whether it is a full compliance or partial compliance, demand remains strong because of the late winter weather," Shum said.

"In the short-term, the market is likely to stay in the $55 to $60 range."

Beijing Fuel demand has been rising as freezing cold weather continues to grip the northeast United States, the biggest consumers of heating oil in the world, among concerns this could deplete stockpiles. AFP

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SCIENCE/HEALTH

Edna Cesar O. Mangosing

New diabetes drug found to also improve weight loss

By Charles E. Rohan

A NUMBER OF current medications for type 2 diabetes could cause weight gain as a side effect. This is why weight-loss drugs are also prescribed to obese patients who cannot control weight using dietary measures alone.

Since there is a strong association between obesity and increased risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes—increases in body weight lead to changes in blood lipid and cholesterol levels, predisposing to increased risk of atherosclerosis or clogging of the blood vessels—researchers have looked for drugs that could address both problems.

Among the most promising drugs developed recently is rimonabant, found by studies to produce significant improvements in blood sugar while promoting weight loss in people with type 2 diabetes.

The most recent of these studies is the Study Assessing Rimonabant's Efficacy in Glycemic Control in Diabetic Patients (Sernabet), which involved 278 patients at 56 study centers in the United States, Germany, Argentina, Chile, Hungary, Poland and The Netherlands.

Positive effect

In this particular trial, researchers found that the drug is effective in significantly improving blood sugar levels (HbA1c) over a 24-week period in participants with type 2 diabetes and who are not currently treated with any antidiabetes medications.

INDIVIDUALS with type 2 diabetes must also watch their waistline.

The Sernabet also reported benefits beyond improving blood sugar levels including reducing weight and waist circumference, and improving other cardiometabolic risk factors such as bad cholesterol and triglyceride levels.

"The management of type 2 diabetes should not only focus on controlling blood sugar levels but also aim in improving other risk factors such as weight, good and bad cholesterol, triglycerides and blood pressure. The results shown in the Sernabet studies is indeed very promising," said Dr. Alma Catarata, medical director of Sanofi-Aventis, the pharmaceutical giant that discovered and developed rimonabant.

First of its kind

Rimonabant is the first of its kind in the class of drugs known as selective cannabinoid type 1 (CB1) blockers.

"The CB1 receptors are believed to play a role in exacerbating food consumption and the processes of dependency and addiction. Compounds with potential to inhibit the activity of this receptor were then screened, to which rimonabant emerged as the most promising," Catarata related.

She said the development of drugs that address type 2 diabetes and obesity is very important considering that currently more than 194 million adults or 5 percent of adults worldwide have been diagnosed with diabetes, with type 2 diabetes constituting 85 percent to 95 percent of those diagnoses.

90 percent

"Approximately 80 percent of type 2 diabetes is attributed to people being overweight or obese and worldwide, diabetes is among the leading causes of blindness, renal failure and lower limb amputation, as well as death through its effects on cardiovascular disease (78 to 80 percent of people with diabetes die of cardiovascular disease)," Catarata said.

Rimonabant was approved as an adjunct to diet and exercise for the treatment of obese patients or overweight patients with associated risk factors, such as type 2 diabetes or dyslipidemia in the United Kingdom, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Ireland, Australia and in its prime, where it is known as Acomplia.

The drug is still awaiting approval in the United States as well as in the Philippines, however.

Protect our heart

ACCORDING TO THE 2003-2004 National Nutrition and Health Survey, four out of every 10 Filipino adults who are 50 years old and above have experienced heart attacks or strokes, including symptoms such as sudden weakening, numbness and slurring. The last two may be the signs healthy don't mind; it to follow a healthy lifestyle.

To herald the Love Month, let us be reminded of ways we can prevent the most important organs we have—our hearts. I acknowledge the help of Eva T. Gilda, Department of Science and Technology senior, for the following facts.

Diet and exercise

One, eat the right kind and the right amount of food. We need to consume large amounts of fiber from complex carbohydrates such as whole grains, fruits and vegetables. We have to reduce the intakes of salt and fat which abound in fast food and processed foods.

Two, exercise regularly daily from helping us lose weight, exercise also improves blood circulation, leading to stronger heart muscles and healthier blood vessels. In this way we can reduce the risk factors for cardiovascular disease.

Smoking and drinking

Three, stop smoking. Thirty-five out of 100 adult Filipinos who are at least 20 years of age are estimated to be smokers. Strong links have long been established between cigarette and cigar smoking and high blood pressure, heart attacks, and strokes.

Four, drink alcohol in moderation. Heavy drinking of alcoholic beverages raises blood pressure and damages heart muscles. Cardiologists advise us to limit alcohol to one drink a day (for women) and two drinks a day (for men). We are not talking of giant glasses here. One standard drink equals 3 bottles of beer or half a glass of wine.

Stress and sleep

Five, reduce stress. In today's fast-paced world, we cannot avoid stress. However, we can reduce it, or change our response to it. Why can stress be deadly? Because it increases some of the risk factors mentioned, such as cortisol, which in turn raises blood glucose and blood pressure. Many studies have revealed that aside from heart attacks or strokes, people are more prone to colds and other infections during times of stress, because their immune system is down. Meditation may help calm us during stress.

Six, get enough good sleep. Numerous research has shown that lack of sleep can eventually lead to increased weight, and also to development of heart disease. A good restorative sleep of 7 to 8 hours soothes us both in the soul and in the body.

Mighty fruits

Fruits are mighty foods. According to Dr. Maida Fabros of the Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI), fruits contain vitamins and minerals to protect eyesight, keep our skin smooth and prevent us from getting sick. They help cleanse our intestines against infection, and because they are good sources of fiber, they also help prevent constipation, particularly in the elderly.

Experts suggest two to three servings of fruits every day. Our dietary guideline is equivalent to one medium-size fruit, or one cup of cut-up big fruit. Moreover, one to three servings should be vitamin C-rich fruits, such as mango, a medium-size papaya, cashew, ripe mango, small guava, orange, chiko, atis, guyabano, tangerine and sampaguita.

Malnutrition

Pregnant and breastfeeding women are at risk for malnutrition because of increased nutrient needs, such as protein, folate, iron, calcium and iodine. Fruits are needed by the fetus or the baby.

During pregnancy, the mother's nutritious reserves will usually be depleted if her food intake is inadequate. The growing fetus uses the mother's reserves to protect itself, but if there is risk to the mother's health, the baby is born underweight, may result to low birth weight, less than 2.5 kilograms.

During breastfeeding, a good diet is required for continuous milk supply to ensure the baby's needs for the second six months.

However, a survey conducted by the FNRI reveals that 95 Filipino pregnant and breastfeeding women eat less than what is required. In fact, all nutrients except for vitamin A are below recommended allowances. According to Mildred O. Guirindola, "The results demand urgent action on the alarming dietary inadequacies of Filipino women."

The government needs to intensify information and education campaigns on healthy pregnancy and breastfeeding in the community level.

* * *

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The science of shopping

DISCOVER

Maunie Santos Ruibon

PRETEND YOU WANT A COOKIE DIGEST now. Now pretend you just happen to be in a supermarket nearing dinner time with dozens of similar cookies to choose from. How do you decide which pack of cookies to buy?

The obvious answer might be personal preference, as influenced by factors such as previously sampling the cookies, seeing ads for it, and having friends recommend the product. Another answer would be to select by price. Or you might choose the cookies you find at a friend's party but would it taste 4 times as much as the cookies you ate as a child?

To help economists—and maybe even psychologists—answer all of these questions, a doctoral student from Carnegie Mellon University and MIT to look in how people consider personal preferences and price when shopping. Their study appears in the Jan. 1 issue of the journal Science.

Virtual shopping trials

Twenty-six people took part in the study, which consisted of two identical virtual shopping trials done a few weeks apart. Known as "grocery" and the other as the "mall" and, in both cases, the participants were given US$ 100 to spend and asked to look at a number of products, all of which had been discounted by 75 percent of their actual retail price and subsequently bring sold to them for prices ranging between $0 and $30.

Volunteers first saw a picture of the item, and then a picture with the item's price, before being asked if they would like to buy it. For example, a box of Godiva chocolates was being offered for $7. Each item was only shown for a few seconds and was not seen again, forcing participants to make their decisions quickly. Any purchases made were actually shipped to the volunteers after the shopping experience.

Previous studies had shown that certain portions of the brain are activated when a person anticipates either a financial gain or a material one. Knutson et al. designed their experiments to see if consumers' neural activity could help predict what they would ultimately select a product based on either personal preferences or item price. By using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to see the activated sections, researchers expected to see different parts of the brain light up when only the item was shown or when its price was indicated. Theoretically then, one of these areas would remain lit upon selection to indicate which was the deciding factor.

3 areas of the brain

The virtual shopping sessions showed that participants consistently chose the same 30 percent of the items they were shown both trials. Knutson et al. also identified 3 areas of the brain that were activated: the NAcc lit up when personally preferred items were chosen; the MPFC was activated when low prices were shown; and the insula lit when "excessive" prices appeared. The MPFC and NAcc activations matched their purchasing decisions. Interestingly, the researchers found that only the anterior cingulate, previously known to be involved in conflict resolution was also activated when shoppers debated buying an item they rejected and later on equally high prices. However, this part of the brain could not indicate the final decision.

Knutson et al.'s research has great economic implications, given that it could tell suppliers what products are and how much they're willing to pay for it. That side of results might look different if the fMRI data on each product were available, for example. Unfortunately, department stores and supermarkets are not likely to encourage the experiment outside of the laboratory, given the equipment costs and the need to have trained personnel who can interpret both the fMRI data and the consumer's choices. That would be an interesting shopping trip, though, and for an interesting shopping trip! Consumers at all could conduct based on their data through, according product manufacturers were given the opportunity to make such a decision.

E-mail the author at mruibon@manila.com.

Spa for breastfeeding moms now open at Asian Hospital

FINALLY, A SPA MEANT TO SERVE the needs of pregnant women who intend to breastfeed their babies is now open. And right in the lobby of a hospital, the first ever in the country.

What started as a personal choice to breastfeed her own twin babies 13 years ago turned into an advocacy work for a recent spa for Dr. Rebecca B. Singson, founder of the Bellevita Spa, located on the ground floor of the Asian Hospital and Medical Center on Civic Drive, Alabang, Muntinlupa City.

An obstetrician-gynecologist, Singson named Bellevita Spa with the primary aim of "serving pregnant women, especially those who intend to breastfeed their own newborn children."

Difficult experience

Having undergone the difficult experience of breastfeeding her twins, "especially since it sometimes would take as long as four days before your son's milk becomes available, I envisioned a spa that would provide lactation massage that would ensure that the mother is able to breastfeed her own child within an hour from delivery at the same time, I also wanted it to provide therapeutic massage for pregnant women with certain difficulties."

DR. Rebecca B. Singson with twins Gio and Gio, whom she breastfed 13 years ago. Beside her is husband Luciano Zobel.

Singson's advocacy for breastfeeding started two years ago when she organized the screening of therapists specifically for lactation massage and support.

Dynamic fluid

Singson points out that "breast milk is such a dynamic fluid that it is unheard to think that any kind of formula milk can even come close to it. Human milk has over 500 ingredients, including interferon, white blood cells and antibacterial and antiviral agents."

She enumerates various advantages derived from human milk such as "the increase of the level of carbohydrate that is needed by infants as much as three of formula fed infants assuring them of protection from diarrheal diseases, and the presence of antibodies resulting in lower incidence of pneumonia and urinary tract infections." She adds that breastmilk protects the child from cancer before the age of 15.

On the part of the mothers, the clinic studies undertaken by Yale University researchers proving that "breastfeeding confers some protection against uterine cancer, ovarian cancer and breast cancer if women breastfeed for at least two years."

At the same time, in response to her patients' needs, Singson also had her massage therapists trained in prenatal massage to provide comfort to pregnant women who have to suffer from difficulties including neck, back and joint pains, cramps and sores, to name a few.

Singson clarifies that her clinic has been offering lactation and prenatal massage to pregnant women for the last two years, but having realized the need for other services right in the hospital, she opened the Bellevita Spa. Its general floor location is made to entice services available to the patients, patients' members, visitors, doctors and staff.

Accordingly, the massage and physical therapists of Bellevita Spa are allowed to visit inpatients right in their rooms. Patients who are not necessarily pregnant may also avail of other services such as body scrub, body massage, body detoxification, foot spa, hand spa with manicure and barber.

International star Lea Salonga, recipient of the Lawrence Olivier and Tony awards for her performance in "Miss Saigon" in London and in Broadway had twice visited Bellevita Spa for lactation massage and to this day, has continuously frequented her daughter with ex-boyfriend Jake Zyrus, a recipient of the day's blessing of the newly built Bellevita Spa Lolas And Guides at the AHMC lobby.

Lactation massage and support services are offered from 10 weeks to 6 months of in the hospital or through home service, as far as Quezon City. Personal massage is also available in a package of 5 sessions.

"We hope to give new mothers their total well-being, including the enhancement of their self-esteem, are also title that pamper-ing our doctors and guests would make it a happier and truly encouraged healthy community," Singson concludes.

PROPERTY

Edna Cesar D. Hongkiang

THE DISTINCTIVE three towers of the Manhattan Parkway Residences will rise at a very advantageous location near LRT1's Roosevelt Avenue station.

Developer benefits from growing confidence in RP property market

By Charles E. Rubio

IN JUST A FEW MONTHS, developer Megaworld Central Properties announced it has sold out the first towers of its latest project, the Manhattan Garden City in Araneta Center, Quezon City and is now into fast-tracking the sale of the second one.

"It's overwhelming and the company applauds this very warm reception to what is currently happening in the country's property sector apart from the type of development we will be offering," described Megaworld Central Properties president Sidney Thaithongtae Yu.

Yu reported that since the project's official launch in July 2006, they were able to sell close to 500 studio units and one-bedroom and two-bedroom units in the first tower of the luxury condominium located northeast of the Gateway Mall (bounded by Araneta Boulevard and Gen. Malvar Avenue).

Two reasons

"I believe there are two main reasons for the brisk sales: the confidence-building developments happening in the country's economy and the trust of local buyers as well as those based or working abroad on the economy's booming prospects market," Yu said.

He reported that the country's stock market is now doing very well: the banks are lending at very low rates, and there is strong interest to purchase housing units.

"These are perfect ingredients for our property sector to reach the so-called boiling point," he said, "which refers to the phenomenon of an exceedingly rapid expansion of a certain sector. In this case, the property sector," he shared.

Low rate package

Last December, Megaworld Corp. and Security Bank launched Homelife, which offers low interest rates and long payment terms for the Manhattan Garden City as one of the primary projects for this groundbreaking loan package.

"Homelife comes in a choice of up to 10 budget-friendly packages that include the Super Mega Light, which charges a low 5.5% promo interest a year, fixed for two years and amortizes during the same period; Mega Light 30, which charges 6.5 percent interest a year, fixed for 10 years and at 10 percent down payment; and Mega Growth 15, which charges 10 percent interest a year, fixed for 15 years and at 20 percent down payment. For a set of homebuyers and investors, these packages are indeed, irresistible," he said.

Strategic location

According to Yu, the Manhattan Garden City's strategic location is another reason so many buyers are attracted.

"Once completed, the Parkway Residences will feature a five-hectare podium area that will house upscale residential units. This will complement nearby retail elements that are now within the Araneta Center area.

"The fact that the Manhattan Garden City is also a transit-oriented development, that is, it will be connected to both the Philippine Light Rail Transit People Line or LRT 2 (making use of two of its stations in Manila to Antipolo in Quezon City) and the Manila Metro Rail Transit System or MRT 3 (running almost the length of Edsa from North Avenue in Quezon City to Taft Avenue in Pasay City, the project is indeed a main draw many from easy access to Metro Manila's major destinations," he said.

He also said a series of elevated walkways and pathways will connect the project to these stations, enabling future residents to traverse the whole development on foot and to these stations without having to go down and cross the busy streets and at the same time ensure utmost safety and convenience.

Overall design

With the first finishing of the second tower, Megaworld Chief Operations and Legends and Icons interior designer, the second tower will still carry Parkway Residences' overall design concept.

"The new design will reflect the luxurious lifestyles of our buyers as highlighted by their fluid and dynamic designs. The curvilinear profile on each of the tower's rooftop will give clear views of the metropolis silhouette as well as giving them that distinctive look. The goal is to make them more recognizable as they stand within the Araneta Center," he explained.

5 success factors of energy-efficient buildings

(See also page)

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN PRINCIPLES are simple, but their advantages are enormous. Green design is not a new architectural style, but a new way of thinking on how to design, construct and maintain buildings.

Green buildings are more gentle on Mother Earth. They do not pollute the environment. They have good indoor air quality and use natural, sustainable materials. They also cost less to run and maintain. With these advantages, there is a growing awareness among building owners worldwide to invest in green buildings.

In particular, many are beginning to set their sights on the benefits of energy efficiency and conservation. They install energy saving products and apply the latest technology to reduce their energy bills. Once the system is installed, however, they expect everything to run smoothly and that everything will go to plan. They don't want problems. They forget that it takes more than a sophisticated software and hardware to achieve energy efficiency and conservation in a building.

Energy efficiency can be successfully attained only if the vital elements are in place, starting with the most important element, the involvement and support of the top management. Next is to identify the proper design of the building, the energy management system, a commitment and continuous improvement program and lastly, the involvement of the staff and building occupants.

Without the involvement and support of top management, any effort to improve or install an energy efficiency program is doomed. In many cases, the decision makers in the penthouses are not aware of or are indifferent to what the technical and engineering staff is doing at the basement. They express monthly reports about the performance of the building but with no one to chew chestnuts and chew parameters, they will not know what they are missing. It's like a drumming gallery without targets.

GREEN ARCHITREMDS

Amanda de Jesus

A big developer was asked which among the many high-rise buildings they own is the most energy-efficient. He said he did not know. This is the present state or level of energy efficiency awareness that we have in the country.

A strong commitment line should be established between top management and the engineering staff so that both technical and financial goals can be defined and achieved. Only good setting examples would be to reduce energy bills by 5 percent for the first three months, then 10 percent for the next six months and so on until the final target is achieved. Then, maintain the momentum globally. This would require reviewing historical records so that benchmarks can be established.

Once the targets are set, all the reports should indicate how the building is being, whether it is satisfying up or lagging behind. This should be the main focus of the technical staff and also the building occupants. Their action in lower monthly electricity bills the top management will be encouraged further to support and get involved in the program.

Building design

Energy efficiency can be achieved through careful planning of the passive and active building design, as mentioned in previous articles.

Passive design measures prepare building orientation and envelope design. Building orientation is the position of the building in relation to solar exposure. The building envelope includes the walls, doors, windows and the roof. The active design includes the lighting, air conditioning, elevators, pumps, etc. These elements have to be considered not only to achieve energy efficiency but also to enhance the working conditions of building occupants while preserving the environment.

Energy management system

Energy efficient buildings today are equipped with an energy management system (EMS) that is the brain of the total building control system. The system monitors the operations of all the services within various types of buildings like offices, hospitals, airports, schools and hotels. The system is designed to control electricity, air-conditioning, various and other equipments) and only to use energy aware, but also to improve working conditions within the building.

A feedback system enables information time-to-time in dynamic and animated graphics on the computer screen, and the obtained data are used for maintenance and improvement purposes. If any devices are overheated for example, the computer system will give an alarm signal.

Malaysia's Bank Negara Malaysia Central Bank is an excellent example of a very sophisticated system called "Total Building Management System that integrates all conventional airport operating systems. It collects data for building management from various parts of the building without the need for personnel to make inspection trips. The building has a lovely with a total gross floor area of 206,000 sq.m.

DMA Worldwide Solutions Inc. with 8,000 sq.m. floor area, is a power building with a high level of energy conservation and high energy efficiency rates. Its energy saving programs include shortening duration of use of electric light resulting in 10 percent cost savings to one year.

To be continued)

For the 2007 Asian Energy Awards, please call Mr. Khalon Damargo of the Department of Energy at 840-2245.

For comments or inquiries, email arbuckleasean@gmail.com.

INDONESIA'S BNI Wisma 46 Tower, one of the winners in the Asean Energy Awards 2004, is an 8,600 sq.m office area, is a green building with high levels energy efficiency and high energy efficiency ratio.

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Living on love and luxury at Amore of Portofino

LOVE IS THEIR IN THE AIR AT BEST 2005 Corp. At the core of this maverick real estate developer is more than just a passion for living but a deep commitment to life and all the joys it brings.

A reflection of this unwavering devotion is Amore of Portofino, an 11 hectare exclusive that brings to life all the attributes of true love. If love had a home, Amore would undoubtedly be it.

"Amore is simply a love affair with the land," said Bernamy president Eng. Socrates Pamintuan. "It's for couples who've been all along been scrambling to all our developments in Pampanga, that is, the romance and passion of Italian living. And since this is what Portofino is to us, it comes but naturally for us to propose a romantic—not faked or pretentious—love affair with its people and guests in a property development. As reflected in our tank would, 'we have a knack for pushing the envelope for their and Amore is another such example," Socrates reckoned.

Situated on the quiet road connecting the Las Piñas Circle-Laguna-Bumbingan Link Road to the San Pedro Exit in Laguna, Amore of Portofino is a unique development in its true sense of the word. Succinct signs of lofty it sits on prime, livable, rolling terrain studded by trees and can easily be accessed through three major road arteries. It is 30 minutes away from the metropolitan, 60 to 65 minutes from the metropolitan and 30 minutes from Makati. Its within its walls lies a paradise that truly speaks the language of love and passion.

Amore of Portofino offers premium solutions for its residents. Its amenities are integrated more of the landscape, tables for passive and recreational uses were limited underground. Perimeter fences and boulder rows line the boundary lots to ensure security aside from the 24-hour guards that safeguards the entire community. Deep wells and water reservoirs ensure a round-the-clock water service. Garbage is collected every other day. Real estate, a professional property management team ensures the community and makes sure that the high standards are maintained long after the last lot has been purchased.

Bernamy Development Corp. still shows upon the gates of Amore, with a grand launch in one of its exquisite model homes called the "Tuscan." Guests will definitely be swept away by the Tuscan's refinite charm, finds of its three bedrooms has a private toilet and bath for greater privacy. The den can double as a guest room or study. And the family on the second floor has its own balcony love for enjoying gist. Its kitchen and pantry implies. Just by looking at the Tuscan, you will understand why romance resides at Amore.

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BUSINESS

Sale of state assets fetched ₱5.815B in 2006

Transco bid seen to push through

By Abigail L. Ho

MAKATI CITY, HIGH SCHOOL ACCIDENTAL—AFTER being shelved several times over the past few years, bidding for the 20-year National Transmission Corp. (Transco) concession is expected to finally take place on Monday, with no indications that it will be postponed yet again.

Energy Secretary and Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) vice chair Raphael Lotilla said the bidding should encounter no more hitches as it had in the past.

"Preparations are proceeding for holding the bidding as scheduled," Lotilla told reporters here yesterday. "[Finance Secretary and PSALM chair Margarito Teves and I are in constant communication. We see no problems ... with the bidding on Monday."

As to other hitches, Lotilla said that PSALM, the agency tasked to privatize the Transco concession, could not know until the last minute who the final bidders would be.

So far, the government agency has prequalified three groups. The consortium of Israel Electric Transco Holdings Corp. (45 percent), Malaysian Ranhill Bhd. (5 percent) and Hyundai Engineering & Construction Co. (50 percent); the group of Citadel Holdings Corp. and partners Calaca High Power Corp. (40 percent), Aboitiz Power Corp. (40 percent) and Alsons Consolidated Resources Corp. (20 percent); and Chaucer Holdings Corp. (40 percent), Marubeni Corp. (40 percent) and Chaucer Energy Corp. (20 percent).

Lotilla said the government's reserve price for Transco is ₱60 billion.

Lotilla also said the government is expected to receive ₱3 billion to ₱4 billion from the sale of the Agus-Pulangi hydroelectric power plant complex.

The pre-qualified bidders, should they wish to push through with plans to vie for the contract to maintain, operate and expand the nationwide transmission grid, will have until noon on Monday to submit their final technical and financial bids.

The national government is expected to fetch at least $500 million for the 25-year Transco concession.

The winning bidder then has 12 months to execute a Congressional franchise to operate the transmission network.

Gov't exceeds last year's target set at ₱500M

By Michelle V. Rosca

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT earned ₱5.815 billion from the sale of state assets in 2006, exceeding initial forecasts and the official target set for that year.

Under the 2006 fiscal program, the government's privatization revenue target was set at ₱500 million.

Also, the Department of Finance earlier announced that proceeds from the privatization effort in 2006 would only fetch about ₱4.3 billion.

The revenue that the government generated last year from its privatization effort was the highest since 1998. In 1997, when the Ramos administration embarked on an aggressive campaign to privatize estate assets, the government generated ₱9.426 billion in revenue.

Four of the revenues in a given period comes in the form of partial payments for state-owned assets that had been retained in the Bureau of the Treasury.

The Arroyo administration has adopted the policy of privatizing state-owned assets that it thinks will be better off in the hands of the private sector.

Big-ticket government assets sold last year included the former Manila Gas property, the former property of the International School, real estate properties in Batangas in Japan, and the state's shares in Mirvahill Water Systems Inc. The government likewise generated revenue from the decision of the Philippine National Oil Co.-Energy Development Corp. (PNOC-EDC) to go public.

After offering stock, the government finally sold the former International School property to Century Properties Inc. for ₱1.432 billion. The prime property measures 48,632 square meters and is situated near the central business district of Makati City.

The government likewise sold the former Manila Gas property in Manila to Robinsons Land for ₱975 million.

The state-owned shares in Mayfair Water was sold for ₱57 million. The consortium of DMCI Holdings and Metro Pacific acquired the shares, and the right to operate the water concession.

According to earlier reports, the PNOC-EDC raised ₱9.113 billion in revenues from the initial public offering of the government's 5.2 billion shares in the non-voted block. Of the amount, 80 percent would be used to fund projects to develop renewable energy. The other half would be divided between PNOC-EDC and the government.

In 2006, the revenue from privatization, along with the Bureau of the Treasury's income, totaled ₱119.35 billion. The amount helped reduce the government's budget deficit to a figure much lower than the official ceiling.

The BIR income hit ₱713.9 billion (or ₱9.139 billion or nearly 2%).

The national government's budget deficit last year settled at only ₱62.2 billion, much lower than the ₱125.... billion target set in 2006.

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Pinoys in Vegas page C3

Neo Futurist takes by Dolce&Gabbana, Balenciaga, Louis Vuitton & Chaleyon page C7

Wanna see your future? page C7 Go to the Psychic Festival!

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'Superizing' software

—the gospel according to Bill Gates

YESTERDAY you connected to the world. Today, the world starts connecting to you.

According to:

"WINDOWS Vista is having its whole-of-ground launch at IDC Plaza of Asia today, Feb. 3. Everyone is invited.

UP UNTIL NOW, PEOPLE had to learn the language of computers. Now is the time for computers to learn the language of the people."

I spent my birthday with Bill Gates and son, some geek stars. Only in Las Vegas can nerds and porn stars (inspiration for "Beauty and the Geek?") gather together for the biggest (no pun intended) trade fair where the big hellraiser Japan, no pun intended) of cardiac lifestyle battle for consumer preservation (this time, pun intended.)

Spread across different venues in the Las Vegas strip, the 2007 International Consumer Electronics show (CES) served as a prophesy into the future in terms of technology (Sony TV sets, iPods impersonators and "sluggable" cell phones) were among the attractions—it was a gathering of who had the biggest "what-ever." a bragging rights but among those who go gaga over gizmos and gadgets. Right across the giant exhibition halls at The Sands Expo Convention Center to Mandalay Bay Advanced Video Convention. Or literally, the geeks and the sets, freaks were here to fuse.

Since my experience dictated that I venture into unknown waters, I chose to stay put at the CES venues, at the giant Microsoft booth to be exact. I wanted to fully breathe in this new range of fun for me. I used to be wowed by computers ever since my Microbiz teacher in high school poured us in a tablet terms.

I even used to handwrite my business columns and had a secretary input it into the system. It took me a couple of years before I actually conquered that fear and hired Bill Gates' cell as he "changed the world, one desktop at a time."

A new Vista

Las Vegas during winter is a flurry of Degas Da Bolid shows, Celine Dion, and even Martin Nievera, but our day was significant was somewhere than TECHNOLOGY. Since there's always a technology gathering, I was expecting him to appear with some spy fanfare, to a hologram version of himself, so he teleports his brains in front of the audience. I was wrong. After a brief video montage of him in various appearances and comical circumstances (Bill Gates as Harry Potter and Amelie Poulain, among other incarnations—I love him already), he simply walked onto the stage and confidently introduced his latest epiphany... the new Windows Vista.

The new generation Bill Gates is into finding a new level of self and has dedicated his life into making the world a better place and philanthropy. But he doesn't stop at that. That day he was talking about a new view his Vista view on how the software giant aims to give us "connected experiences"—a software that allows us to live our lives to the fullest while experiencing every minute with whom we love.

"Everything is more connected," said Gates as he showed off nineties technology that connects cars, game consoles to high tech gadgets that are easy to use.

"Whether Vista is all about enabling people to achieve their passions, whether its music, gadgets or family. It's definitely easier to use, its safer, more convincing and keeps everyone better connected. In a nutshell, it's simply stunning," echoed Chay Mondejar-Bagwill, product manager for Windows in the Philippines.

The digital decade is upon us, and we have nothing to be scared about. Scared of too many wires? Microsoft has your solution. Losing files? Windows Vista allows you to access your computerless in just a few clicks. Has a good photographer? Again, Vista can make your images look better. In short, a whole new game plan is in the works and, ugh is happening, and it's called Windows Vista.

Fun, connected experiences

Whereas computers and their kind were once viewed as solitary enhancement machines (I don't get to see my MP3 anymore—he's always on his PC!"), Bill's brief demo of the Vista system had him push a couple of buttons to show how we can be more in touch, more connected. Microsoft group product manager Justin Steinhilaver then showed off the first-ever Internet chat allows the use of any video clip as wallpaper. They showed us a photo of a magnificent waterfall, which became even more magnificent with the Windows Vista Ultimate touch—the waterfall actually moved! (Still-motion desktops—I bet the folks at the Ashok Video Convention will have a field day with this feature. Now let's get our minds off the games and back to Gates.)

This transformation encapsulates the existence of how Vista can improve our home and work lives. Wallpapers that don't move, dreamlike transition photos, lost files and fruitless searches will now be part of the past.

Bill, with his vision of the future (here know

SUPERIZING P7

EVERYTHING HIGH DEFINITION. Samsung's range of savvy screens.

LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE. Sunny and snowy in the Microsoft Campus in Redmond, Seattle.

GET OUT OF MY DREAMS, GET INTO MY CAR. Gamers get the ride of their life.

TAKING GAMING TO ANOTHER LEVEL. The playsta are having a field day at the Microsoft booth.

WORKLIFE Buzzed in the office of the future.

Photos by TIM YAP Using KODAK V110

Scene in Vegas

A VENETIAN WELCOME. This musician was Bill Gates' treat on...

WHILE this girl served in waiters...

BEHIND THE SCENES. This was not part of the show.

FAMILY TIES. Negros Island chefs Jun and Geraldine Pangilinan-Tatlonghari and daughter Sophia.

MAIN ATTRACTION. ABS-CBN's Kamalia Constantino after Dancentity.

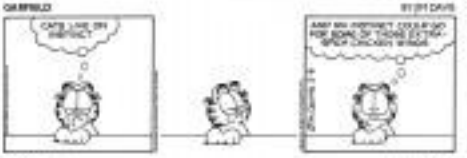
CHILDHOOD BUDDY. Rupert Monte is walking a comeback.

PINOY HYGIRL. My former CLUB TV cohost Laarni Jusay.

ONE OF the many Pinoys in Las Vegas, Anthony Bernardino.

PHILLY-BASED. Geraldine Constantino and hubby Neal.

GARFIELD

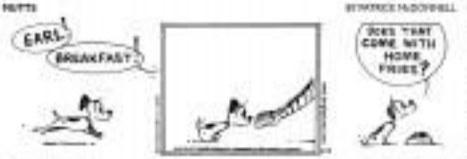


A. LIPAY

BABY BLUES

PUGAD BABOY

HUTTS



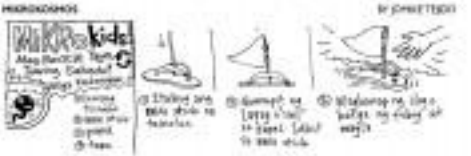
UNWANTS

KYOKO AND MOODY

DIVINE COMEDY

KIKO PINOKHIO

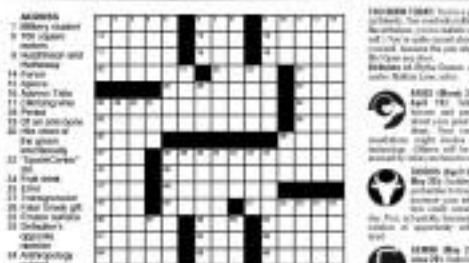
MAGNOLIMOS



TULDOK

BEN

DAILY CROSSWORD



HOROSCOPE

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku — by Dave Green

5					1	3		7
	3				6		8	
8					7			
7	1	3						
				6		5		
						9	3	8
				4				9
	7			1			6	
4		1		8				5

Difficulty Level ★★★★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Type and print puzzles at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

7	4	9	3	1	8	2	5	6
6	8	2	5	4	9	1	7	3
1	5	3	7	2	6	4	9	8
9	2	4	6	7	3	5	8	1
8	3	1	2	9	4	6	3	7
5	7	6	1	8	5	3	4	2
2	1	8	4	5	7	8	3	9
3	9	7	8	6	1	2	5	4
4	6	5	9	3	2	7	1	8

Difficulty Level ★★★★

TOMORROW'S EVERYDAY. Dolce and Gabbana's Spring/Summer 2007 advertising campaign features models cavorting

The WOW starts now

BALLROOM ON ICE. Hamilton Peacock, Girlicued's Faith Weiss, 20 others

FLOWERY LOVE. Patricia's Co-owners and planners—she modern-styled

The future's so bright, everyone needs shades

By Tim Yap

THE JETSONS WOULD HAVE loved to live in our era when Jane's flatscreen parents (the pun is dead, dissolute, but fresh!) and future have been blurred and made more sharp and crystal clear—everything to high definition no less.

Microsoft showed us the "Home of the Future" and the "Office of the Future" at their Microsoft Campus in Redmond, Seattle. But what's in the world, things are also moving at bullet speed—the fashion, art, music, media are more connected in easy, bite-size ways. The way to go as today's citizens (upgradables, full breakfasts, and self-service toilets) is to save the cost of the global crowds to your own PC.

Witness on this page the global consequence of the future, proving once again that you can't argue with a Bill Gates prediction.

SPACEWEAR FITTING. Hussein Chalayan's Spring/Summer '07 runway luxuries

THEATER OF THE FUTURE. The Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis by architect Jules Moussi

ENJOY THE TOMORROWS. THE BUBBLE WRAP. The Beijing National Aquatic Center which is being built for the 2008 Olympics, designed by architect Chris Bosse

THE FUTURE owner of this pair could be YOU.

May the Force Be with You

THE TASK OF HEROES COLUMBUS PAST and aspiring future outfit athletes is the story of Nike, which is the shoe of the future.

Since its debut, the Air Force 1 has been the footwear that epitomized what the sport of basketball means to those who love it. From the hardwood on the streets of New York, Philadelphia and the rest of the world, the concept of Air Force 1 was not only applied on-court, it was applied in life.

Air Force mania in Manila

Today, the Force-inspired shoes will be debuted for the whole year as Nike unleashes off one Nike Air Force 1 Lux ensemble over the Force 1 Lux Ensemble starting at P7,000,000 a pair at the Nike Air Force Space, located at the Manila 22 Club (MEC) in The Fort, Taguig. In the end, there will only be one Nike Air Force Lux in the Philippines who will walk with the Lux fauxwear and another who will skin their feet into the Lux crocodile mood. Winners also get the chance to fly to Singapore to personally pick up their prize, which is, of course, a pair of Nike Air Force Specs in the country. Not only will the winner's collection be the envy of every sneakerhead alive, but he will be doing people good because the proceeds of the auction will go to Special Olympics Philippines.

Aside from the auction, the night will be capped by free flowing old school music emceed by DJ Ace and Men of Stake Entertainment.

25 years of basketball knowledge, 25 years of craftsmanship, 25 years of culture, heritage and that's only the beginning. The future of Air Force One holds a promise of another 25 years of legendary performance and iconic style—a future created by the visionaries at Nike who have dedicated themselves to both the preservation of the shoe's soul and the innovation of its spirit.

'Superizing' software—the gospel according to Bill Gates

from page C1

posts us to a bus stop where he picks up his phone and the screen comes alive showing us an arrival time of where he's at, the exact street in 3D, with restaurant recommendations to boot. It's like having your own personal butler named Bill Gates.

"The basic idea is not enough to deliver on the promise of digital devices. There are some key things missing, and in part to solve the key things missing is the connection," Gates added as he humanized hardware in his keynote address. "Connecting on-demand experiences—where people are being productive, doing some connector things, where they're sharing with each other, where they're mobile, where they're just playing games—that is the key element that's missing. And something that we're all getting to deliver on no other full advantage of that hardware, and delivering on the promise." In other words, Bill is promising to deliver on the "P" word—fun.

Ready, get set, game!

Gates and Microsoft Entertainment and Devices Division president Robbie Bach gave sneak previews of its impressive lineup of connected, on-demand products and services which would rock the world of pop-up culture.

Aside from the Windows Vista-loaded PCs, Windows Vista Ultimate (the flagship edition of Windows Home and other Vista features, Gates hints got first dose of Microsoft Zune, Windows mobile devices and an improved Xbox 360 video game and entertainment system. You go, gamers.

The Zune's shrunken dropout also introduced a new partnership with Red Matter Co. that will woo children digital experiences to the car. Sync, a fully integrated, voice activated, in-car entertainment and communications system for mobile phones and digital music players like Zune. Sync will give drivers the ability to control their digital music players using voice commands or controls on the steering wheel. Sync will also offer hands-free phone dialing, address book access, directions, and other features such as the ability to send text messages through the car's audio system. Sync Didn't jumping your ride. I know it! David Hasselhoff and his Knight Rider jet ran to someone!

The consumer-oriented company, which wants "I follow dollars a year in rewards" (the biggest R&D budget for any company in the world) this introduced Microsoft Windows Home Server, which promises to be a "cool and a bull-proof of course for all the digital content in the home."

Bill Gates takes the concept of a digital home and offers 20 million levels up by introducing his road's current strategy hosted on the internets and performances of his various it's you happens to be hosted to his and Melinda's house). I found this interesting because it softens Gates' aura of dealing with his users—the makers of about them, allowing it to be molded to fit their needs and desires.

Back to the future

I had the chance to test Microsoft's "Home of the Future" and "Office of the Future" in the Microsoft campus in Redmond, Seattle and it was mind blowing, to say the least. Why first time there was a couple of years ago and now, I am more of the technology actually being used by consumers—it's become so here," said Jordan Rudolfson, emerging products manager at Microsoft based in Seattle, who happens to be a true blooded Pinoy.

Microsoft has made a number of new hardwares connect partners who will make the Vista experience more complete for users—and its more than a thing. Kompetta.com partnered with Microsoft to develop Spotcleanup (Go Bathroom!) which combines live television, real-time scores, information and alerts to keep users hassle updated. Other uses common purchasings in Media Center include Showtime, HBO, Nickelodeon and more.

The private video gamers have a session to host Windows Media Center—Games for Windows—a growing market and Microsoft wants to continue to keep up with the incredible fast pace. "Windows Vista is going to expand that dramatically, by making it more powerful with DirectX 10. Now graphics technologies are already being built into the product so that [the promise of having a game pausing it on your machine, and playing it in dual console, Bach assured.

Microsoft is a brand to partner because it makes gaming with your family a strategy, and help make sure the content is appropriate for their children. That's the new parent empowerment.

Hipsters seal of approval

The major software also offers connectivity to the Live games and entertainment network. This provides connected experiences for gamers, linking their consoles, desktops and communities. Through the Live network, gamers can connect with their friends using Xbox 360 consoles.

The Xbox 360 got the hipster's seal of approval by making it to Jammin Pennies' Television (MTV) series and created by rapper Lupe Fiasco with Microsoft TV (MTV Addicts). Don't be scared of these words—they won't eat you alive. (MTV on Xbox 360 is expected to deliver watch-time TV experiences such as digital video recording capabilities, with gaming, movie viewing, and connection and video findings.

Okay, now read this article all over again. Digest each detail and understand Bradley's comments so let us will allow living is bad we'll ALL have connected experiences.

Wanna see your future? Go to the Psychic Festival!

WE CAN'T BLAME PEOple for being excited. The Chinese New Year brings with it renewed hope for finding love and fortune in the coming months.

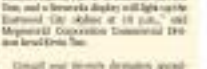
If you can't wait to know what's going to happen to you in the year of the Boar, then head over to Eastwood City where the resident's best psychics are gathered to help give you a sneak peek into your future.

Starting on Feb. 17, Chinese New Year's Eve, until the 22nd, the Eastwood City Walk 2 becomes a home for those who want to learn more about their prospects and improve their luck this year.

For a small fee, people can consult 15 or more divination practitioners. Feng shui consultant Dr. Andy Tan shares, "Each of our divination consultants is an expert on at least four divination tools. For example, a numerology/tarot astrologer from the early-morning/tarot of Kaimala, the astrology/tarot Tarot and the palmist/tarot Tarot. She also seems to have a palm reading ... she can get all of these conventional from one consultant. She doesn't really need to go from one table to the next."

Dr. Tan counts eight most divination tools to make it lucky debut. "Numerology helps people determine the lucky numbers for decisions. An aura reading helps diagnose physical ailments/issues. Runes help discover

PSYCHIC HOTLINE. Tarot card readings, palmistry and aura healing are among Eastwood City's offerings this coming Chinese New Year.



Winning was easy.

Nenita Relles just won this Samsung 46" Neo-series LCD TV and Home Theater System. All she had to do was use her HSBC credit card.

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HSBC makes winning a daily habit

Anybody can say that they can watch TV everyday, but have you ever heard of winning a TV daily? HSBC cardholders were given that chance in HSBC's Daily LCD TV Raffle Promo which ran from October 16, 2006 to January 7, 2007. For 55 straight days, a brand new 26" Samsung LCD TV was given away. All they had to do to join was spend P830 using any HSBC credit card.

Lucky winners of the draws were:

November 2006
Kenneth Hue of Davao City, Nini Aklason of Quezon City, Bernadette Manongsas of Mandaluyong City, James Tan of San Juan, Roberto Valdez of Mandaluyong City, Judith Joy Naranjo of San Pedro, Laguna, Rosario Elvan of Quezon City, Melchor Sapuala of Manila, Bulacan, Dante Francisco of Pasig City, Kenneth Bordid Jr. of Cebu City, Carolina Magtanoc of Paranaque City, Joycelyn Saylon of Dasmarinas, Cavite, Angelica Wong of Quezon City, Arlene Borja of Toledo City, Cebu, Conrado Pascual of Cainta, Rizal, Paul Robert Manga of Quezon City.

December 2006
Ana Linda Abaigar of Tagaig, Jocelyn Sy of Manila, Celestina Ang of Antipolo, Rizal, Salvador Allana II of Caloocan City, Angelyn Arnigo of Cainta, Rizal, Serafin Uy Jr. of Cebu City, Patricia Andrada of Makati City, Nerissa Tuazon of San Simon, Pampanga, Virginia Rabanto of Pasay City, Marivy Galco of San Fernando, Pampanga, Lourdes Eduales of Quezon City, Wilfred Chan of Quezon City, Herman Abigan of Manila, Jocelyn Gajudo of Quezon City, Josefito Miravite of San Jose, Mn. Rosell Santillan of Pasig City, Neric Gatue of Quezon City, Cloydy Tago of Cebu City, Carmen McTavish of Angeles, Pampanga, Mark Pacaraig of Agusan del Sur, Anania Pelongco of Tarlac City, Arthur Tariga of Paranaque, Miriam Serfino of Dasmarinas, Cavite, Jose Mario Buag of Pasig City, Stephen Benedict of Bacolod City, Marcelino Ishidao of Cebu City, Elizabeth Lee of San Juan, Maria Grace Duquigal of Davao City, Elizabeth Lizong of San Juan, Kristoffer Amora of Mandaue City, Cebu, Teresa Chan of Cebu City.

January 2007
Nick Jumadla of Iloilo City, Gabdo Comsi Jr. of Pasay City, Mark Lloyd Abba of Quezon City, Roxanne Jade Espinosa of Davao City, Hanalidan Salonga of Makati City, Emmylou Diez of Quezon City, Jennifer Juvenahan of Quezon City, Eric Brian Duano of Mandaue City, Cebu.

Aside from the 55 TVs won in the daily draws, cardholders also instead focused to the grand draw prize, which was won by Nenita Relles of Bacolod City. She took home a 46" Samsung LCD TV that came with a home theater system. All in all, 56 lucky cardholders walked away with something new to watch.

More to watch out for with your HSBC credit cards

If you use your HSBC credit card at any Caltex station, whether you're getting gas or snacking at Star Mart, you get both a 3% rebate and the Rewards/Bonus Points or Miles that come with your card*. Other cards can only give you one or the other, so why not get both with your HSBC credit card?

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Don't have an HSBC credit card yet? Apply now and once approved, you'll get a free Timex or Ducksp watch* worth over P2,000! Or, you can avail instead of a 40% discount on any other regularly-priced watch at participating Timex stores. Call (02) 751-8000 and get an HSBC credit card today!

* Terms & Conditions apply.

HISSING. Annabella Sciorra as Helen Mirren's regal portrayals of the nervous Jodi and former British monarchs, respectively.

Helen Mirren's two Elizabeths compared

By Nestor U. Torre

QUITE WITHOUT PLANNING TO, Helen Mirren has let loose with a unique thespian one-two punch: She played Queen Elizabeth I on TV and "The Queen," her portrayal of Elizabeth II in a movie as her head moves nervous.

Raves and awards

Mirren's role "Elizabethan" portrayals have been richly rewarded with raves and awards, as it behooves acting buffs to try to rarely both of them, the better to compare Mirren's takes on the two monarchs separated by centuries, but linked by their having the same name and lofty title.

Her newest Mirren's TV-winner-to-be year, and have just previewed "The Queen," as we can do mind it Dec.

Mirren's Elizabeth I was spoiled, mercurial, vain, whimsical, flirtatious, vengeful, vulnerable, and cruel... sometimes, all at the same time.

Since the actress had more time to get her thespic points and insights across, her portrayal was richer, more primacic and occasionally even manifestly contradictory.

This resulted in a Chequy, treasure (two for viewers who wanted to appreciate the controversial monarch in the light of all of

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NOW SHOWING

Changing of the comic guard in wacky romp

By Rico P. Ada

"Night at the Museum"
D- Shawn Levy
C- Ben Stiller, Robin Williams, Owen Wilson, Ricky Gervais, Mickey Rooney

IN SHAWN LEVY'S FEEL-GOOD remix romp, Ben Stiller plays Larry Daley, the down on his luck, divorced father of 10-year old Nick (Jack Cherry).

In a last ditch effort to win his son's respect, the hapless protagonist grudgingly takes a job at the Museum of Natural History in New York to replace by three weeks night watchmen (Jack Van Dyke, Mickey Rooney, Bill Cobbs).

When the night guards leave, however, the magic of an ancient Egyptian tablet brings the place to life!

In no time, Larry finds himself being chased by the skeletal remains of a T-rex (who, it turns out, has designs on Larry's mother, coaching a love-struck CD Wardrobe Teddy Roosevelt (Robin Williams), mediating the territorial clash between Roman generals Octavius (Steve Coogan) and Lancelot (Jonah Hill), and playing chess to the consistently ogdoed Attila the Hun (Patrick Gallagher)—and coping with a huge responsibility that's suddenly

STILLER. The cluster-bitter grows up.

AQUINO AND GARCIA. Tagalt award-winning Cinemabox entry.

"ICU Bed #7"
D- Rico Arevalo
S- Eddie Garcia, Angel Aquino, Irma Adlawan

Cardi Slot reveals Gin Ginkgo's identity in Baltimore Dahlia's Indictive until 6th if Call 410-911-1511. Based on the debuting director's Palanca-winning script and graded B by the CSR, Arevalo's digital feature (this time, with better lighting and image projection) is about two sisters, played by Angel Aquino and Irma Adlawan, who must make a fashionable decision when their tough-talking, stubborn father Eddie Garcia in a career-best performance) is diagnosed with a terminal illness.

Gossip overwhelms local media

By Boots Cervantes

WE FILIPINOS ARE A DELIGHTful people. We smile to many people. We greet many people with our cheers. In these, we appear to be a guileless bunch—until they start reading our newspapers. They wonder why we prefer our news to remain untold.

Our newspaper has observed that our newspapers are generally "trashy." They offer snippets of foreign news, and have few columnists, for many of our newspapers are laden with editorials—photos chronicling social events.

Gospel truth

Writers who report the goings-on of the rich and socially elite are well patronized. Their statements on fashion, trends and society's Who's Who are accepted as gospel truth. There are writers who write their columns like oracles in a high-school school book.

When you switch on the TV set, you are deadened by news stories that are reported as though they were emergencies. You wonder why those stories bother with a subdivision if the newsreport is going to drone, anyway! Come see Jiz Joy's when million-voiced announcers would deliver news updates in a sober manner.

A visiting friend of mine asked me why our TV stations allot so much time to gossip. I was hardpressed for an answer.

Indeed, it has become standard practice to air hourly updates about the latest entertainment scandals. Stories even before that gossip and scandal hours then thick.

Of course, the stations' newsroads reporters are only too glad to chronicle them. In fact, on Sundays, practically the whole afternoon is dedicated to Showbiz's latest scandals. Whatever happened to "Keep holy the Sabbath Day?"

Excesses

There ought to be law against these excesses! I mean, how do gossip shows contribute to the welfare of our people? The presenters are given free rein to invent out "those scandalous stories and happenings has been an terrible rule models for the young.

The biggest issue given to gossip is underscored by the fact that news-evening news programs give almost equal time to gossip and legit news. But, are public service programs given ample time and attention?

Purveyors of gossip have succeeded in making the word this into a cute term when, in fact, this terrible habit perpetuates the malpractice of spreading unsubstantiated and harmful information about an unaware third person.

What are the young to think when their role models are being gossiped about morning, noon and night? Why emulate Boots Anothaio or Nancy when all you need is notoriety?

This, at least, is the message we get from all this gossip on national television. That's disturbing, don't you think?

Fr. Peyton's legacy lives on

By Pachela Concepcion

THE BROADCAST MEDIA AS A means to propagate the power of prayer became a life-long mission for a man who had a wonderful story to tell.

"A working miracle" was how Fr. James Keane, SJ, described his friend, Fr. Patrick Peyton, who, in 1947, was a 38-year-old aspiring priest in America dog-tossed with advanced tuberculosis, and was advised by doctors to turn to prayer—because surgery was not recommended.

Peyton prayed long and hard, and his prayers were answered. The young priest who had boarded on a sickbed was cured by a pure but loving family devotion.

A year later, cured, he founded his own organization, a prayer-based movement. Where he received his miracle cure, Peyton promised the Blessed Virgin Mary he would devote his life propagating the virtues of the rosary as a family prayer.

PEYTON. "A working miracle."

Apostolate

BY NOW 2007, and Fr. Peyton's legacy—54 years after he passed on at age 82—is alive in 27 countries, especially the Philippines where his apostolate, the Family Rosary Crusade (FRC), carries on the mission of promoting the quiet and sanctuary of the family through television.

FRC's long-running TV programs are aired Sundays on 6BS-CBN's Studio 23, Mondays to Fridays on ABS-CBN and Studio 23, and Mondays to Sundays on the Cebu Catholic Television Network.

Recently the Cause of Beatification of Fr. Peyton successfully passed its initial stage in Manila with the closing of the Inquiry Trial—an investigative process that examines the holy deeds of a candidate for sainthood.

Imelda Calimpayan is among those who swear by Fr. Peyton's awe-inspiring character. Already a devotee of the Blessed Mother as a young child, Calimpayan further deepened her involvement in the holy efforts due to Fr. Peyton's influence.

Calimpayan attributes significant changes in her life to Fr. Peyton. "I used to pray the rosary on my own," she continues. "And, I never discussed this—gathering the entire household together is really the best way to pray—especially in moments of crisis."

In recent years, Calimpayan had been burdened by family problems, which have become bearable in the light of a daily prayer—praying a mysteries for Fr. Peyton's intercession, led by her son, Tony Boy. "Everyday, my son makes sure to pray with me," she relates. "And each time I go to the hospital for either a checkup, she tells me that my heart is healing. I think Fr. Peyton is helping me get healed."

The late Philippine Ambassador to Russia, Alejandro Melchor and his wife, Isabel, had likewise been touched by Fr. Peyton's charisma.

The latter recalls meeting the priest sometime in the '70s. "My husband connected Fr. Peyton to the embassy in Moscow and the building equipment. But he was done using to show the films about Mysteries of the Rosary to the premises," she recalls. "Fr. Peyton was instrumental in encouraging a sense of inner knock to the Catholic faith."

Magnetic

Guillermo "Willy" Salmon was a career diplomat in the Central Bank headed by then Fr. Peyton in 1962. "My wife and I were quickly drawn to him," Salmon tells us. "He had a magnetic personality, but he was very down to earth. He was quite famous for having motivated classics like Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra and Grace Kelly endorse his mission. But, in person, he was very humble. He inspired us do our jobs better. I'm being called to his cause, and I'm all praying the rosary regularly."

On the day his older brother, ex-vice-roommate Max Salmon, died of a heart attack in Japan, Willy was attending the Scripture Vigil Chanting and Thanksgiving Mass for Fr. Peyton's Cause of Beatification at the Manila Cathedral. "I told Cardinal Sandoz that blessing Max must be in heaven interceding Fr. Peyton's cause," he says.

(The Family Rosary Crusade is inviting everyone to join the *Fr. Peyton Guild as a means of strengthening prayer life in the family.* Call the Crusade prayer through Fr. Peyton's intercession. Call Fr. Mckenna at 525-6933, *e-mail prayers@frc.org*)

Helen Mirren's two . . .

From page D1

her virtues, vices and vagaries.

On point of contrast, "The Queen" limited actress Mirren to mere impersonation by frame her portrayal of Elizabeth II, zeroing in on the ongoing monarch's private and public responses to the sudden death of her former daughter-in-law, Princess Diana.

At first, Elizabeth was positively frigid in her view of the woman who had well-nigh upstaged her popularity on the global scene.

But, as the public expressed its grief over the death of the well-loved princess, the British royal family received from various circles, and the monarch was harshly made to defend her aloof view of the situation.

Unusual transformation

A key agent in this unusual transformation was England's then-new Prime Minister, Tony Blair. Initially, the queen hardly deigned to talk to the "young upstart."

But, when he curiously read the public's final mood and helped avert catastrophe for the royal family, Elizabeth was until richly her people's gratitude.

"The Queen" is an instructive viewing experience because it shows how removed from reality members of royalty can become—ultimately to their peril.

As for Mirren's portrayal of Elizabeth II, it is psychologically astute and rewarding because it shows both her rare and vulnerable sides. She isn't cast to being criticized, as when her people turn against her and accuse her of insensitivity to the public's grief over Diana's violent death, the monarch seeks refuge behind her frosty exterior.

Vulnerability

But, Mirren is brilliantly sensitive enough to enable us to perceive Elizabeth's vulnerability through her icy facade—truly a tough role to fulfill for any actress. The writing of Peter Morgan's screenplay is also perceptive, as people are betting that Oscar gold is in store for Mirren this year, on top of the many acting honors she has already reaped.

What does Mirren's thespic "equipment" enables her to imaginatively portray the two Elizabeths? Her training in the classics, her understanding of human nature is exceedingly deep, and is matched by her sensitivity with a range of performing skills. Utilized in tandem, these two abilities are well nigh unbeatable in their telling effect on TV and in the movies.

Horror flick with an edge

CAN IS HIDDEN SEE WHAT ADULTS CAN'T? in the riveting new thriller, "The Messengers," the Solomon family has left its fast-paced life in Chicago for the secluded world of a farm in North Dakota.

Once there, however, teenage Jess and her three-year old brother, Sam, begin seeing ominous apparitions invisible to everyone else. When those specters become violent, Jess' sanity is questioned.

Identical twin directors, Danny and Oxide Pang, have turned the ghost genre inside out with "The Messengers"—their first American feature and their English-language debut.

The Pang brothers' movies have a special edge and respect because they themselves have had some brushes with the paranormal. Thus, their way of scaring viewers is less the structured more believable than others.

Oxide shares: "To us, what is scary is when you see alone and the room is completely quiet. Our style is always about the silence."

"The Messengers" stars Dylan McDermott, Penelope Ann Miller and Kristen Stewart.

At Powerbooks

Book lovers, expect lingering until Feb. 17 is a big sale at the Powerbooks Outlet store at 23 Primrose st., Kapitolyo subd., Pasig City. Enjoy a 30 percent discount on all regular items, and up to 50 percent off bargain books. Call 890-1338.

MONTAGE

Today and tomorrow, Powerbooks Specialty Store and the Read or Die Organization will hold a literary convention at the Hotel Intercontinental in Makati. The convention brings together readers, writers, publishers, government and school representatives and book dealers to highlight the importance of reading and literacy.

Participants can watch movies, join contests, buy books, win freebies, participate in discussions, and vote for the Pinoy Reader's Choice Awards. Visit http://www.read.ordie.org.website.

GMA-7 calendar

GMA-7's 2007 poster calendar featuring the most popular Kapuso stars has been produced in cooperation with Fujifilm/TSL, and is available only at Fujifilm and YIG outlets nationwide. The calendar can planner is geared by the stellar likes of Angel Locsin (January), Marian Rivera (February), and Jennylyn Mercado and Mark Herras.

Fujifilm/ YIG is the official distributor of Fujifilm Finepix digital cameras and photo printing services.

'Primeval'

The villain in the exotic thriller, "Primeval," is a bloodthirsty killer who has claimed over 300 victims. An American news team is determined to capture the rarest murderous alive, but the trip proves to be fatal.

Aside from the creature's "monstrous" elements, director Michael Carlson uses a bloody civil war as backdrop and alternate source of tension, as armed men come after members of the news team. "Primeval" stars Orlando Jones, Brennan Elliott and Jacqui Pfeiffer.

'Disco Latina'

With the new "Disco Latina: Shape Up with Rhumba, Samba and Cha Cha" video, instructor Nonoy Lopez shows you the right guidance of famous past stars, Regine Velasquez and Sarah Lahbati. Some features include tips on professional Latin dance and winning dance competitions.

'Ghost Rider'

In the latest movie, "Ghost Rider," Nicolas Cage plays a supernatural motorcycle rider who has made a pact with the devil to protect his loved ones. The devil has other plans. He robbed his due, so at night, Cage becomes the Ghost Rider, a bounty hunter of rogue demons. Eva Mendes co-stars.

UP Opera Season

Dean Ramon "Monon" Acopios of the UP College of Music announces the 30th anniversary celebrations of the UP College of Music that include the annual University Opera Season—Puccini's "La Sorsa Dolorosa" and Puccini's "Dido and Aeneas" on 7 p.m. on Feb. 9 at the Philamlife Theater. Call Verne at 926-3826.

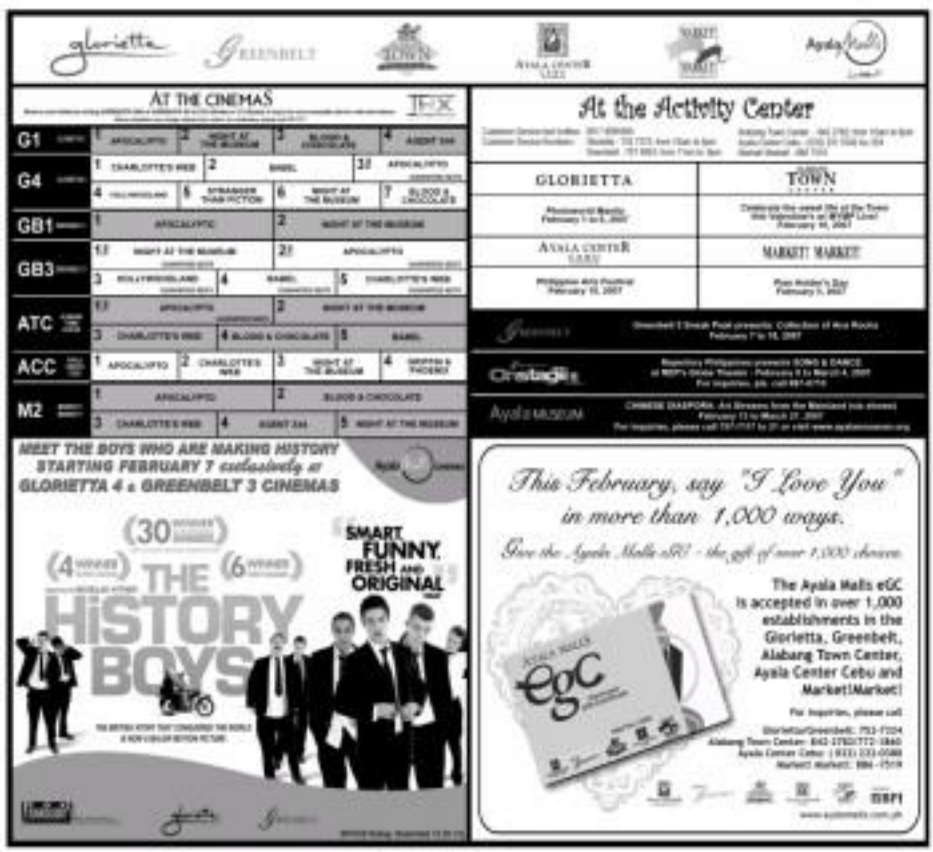
'Sayaw Pinoy'

Tomorrow, Concerts in the Park at Rizal Park presents "Sayaw Pinoy" featuring Ballet Philippines, Ballet Manila, Ramon Obusan, Philippine Ballet Theater and other groups.

Movies on TV

On HBO today at 3 p.m., "Ninth of My Books," tomorrow at 6 a.m., "The Life and Death of Peter Sellers," 10:45 a.m., "Shark 2-7" 6 p.m., "Glory" Feb. 5 at 5 p.m., "In the Name of the Father," Feb. 6 at 1:30 p.m., "Born on the Fourth of July" 9 p.m., "Birds," Feb. 7 at 11:30 a.m., "Star Liar," Feb. 8 at 11:45 a.m., "Rain" 9 p.m., "Wag the Dog," Feb. 9 at 9 p.m., "The Night Of 07."

On Cinemax today at 11:40 a.m., "Mobsters." Tomorrow at 9 p.m., "The Mr. 69" (A beautiful computer expert finds herself entangled in a high-tech romance. This is the first American film to be shot entirely on location in mainland.) Feb. 5 at 6 a.m., "Rain of Riders" Feb. 6 at 6:30 a.m., "War and Peace," Feb. 7 at 6 a.m., "It's a Wonderful Life," 1:45 p.m., "Bonnie and Clyde" Feb. 8 at 9 a.m., "Harper" Feb. 9 at 3:45 p.m., "The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad."



'Charlotte's Web' makes smooth transition to screen

By Nestani Serra

FEMINEN with her perky persona in role.

MAIN CAST OF THE MOVIE, "Charlotte's Web" (yes, breathe easy—the movie retains all the 1952 charm by E.B. White, though not the sequel of an unsure material, unassigned to get strange right).

Cutesy, sprightly, and chock-full of well-cast celebrity voice talents, the movie captures the essence of a book that has enchanted generations of young readers for more than half a century.

Turning cinematic

Set in the idyllic farming community of Somewhere County, Maine, the movie tells a story spanning a year. Wilbur, who is first named Runt when he's young and then Jimmy, lives in an outdoor space. It's a story about friendship, the power of words, and the cycle of life that governs us all.

The story has been modernized a bit, but, thankfully, it retains the spirit and flavor of the original evening mid-dialogue.

There are no jump-outs and reference here, and the subtracting animals are genuine by instinct—no, not all. When young Fern (Dakota Fanning) saves her brother from her father and says, "It is unjust," her statement rings out compellingly.

Fanning is pitch-perfect as the stubborn, tender-hearted Fern Arable. It's hard to imagine another actress playing the part. Her Fern is sweet, but unsentimental—a terrific girl who does what she thinks is right.

Julia Roberts, who voices Charlotte, the spider, also gives a good performance. Her voice is spidery-silky and nocturnal.

Voices

Other big stars who lend their talents to the production are Oprah Winfrey and Cedric the Entertainer as Templeton and Gwen, the goose, respectively. Kathy Bates and Reba McEntire as sister sows, Mary and Betsy; John Cleese as Samuel, the sheep; Steve Buscemi as Templeton, the rat; Thomas Haden Church and Andre Benjamin as the crows, Brooks and Elwyn; Robert Redford as the, the horse, and Sam Shepard as the narrator.

Their participation is unmistakable, as if the—you used to play games like this—but it's still fun to see famous voices and ill- persona in their characterizations.

Dominic Scott Kay who voices Wilbur, isn't a star like the others, but he does very well in their company. He Wilbur well, in fact, so much you of star-actor human talking pig actor mark- his debut is decently ago, but he's no more sign of Babe. E.B. White, after all, invented this talking pig long before Babe was imagined by his creator.

Comparisons

However, comparisons to "Babe" will no doubt be made. Certainly, this movie got its inspiration from that grounded-breaking film, but director Gary Winick has ensured that you'll only have good comparisons in mind.

"Charlotte's Web" is a heartwarming film that will run only movie-goers, but will also remind you about the best important things in life.

3 days of values galore!

SHOP • EAT • SAVE at 3 SM SUPERMALLS

A weekend of great value buys awaits shoppers during the 3-DAY SALE at SM City North Edsa, SM City Sucat and SM City Sta. Rosa on February 2, 3 and 4.

The sale event – SM Supermalls' first for 2007 – offers a wide selection of merchandise tagged at up to 50% off. The value mix includes products and services of anchor stores, shops, restaurants and more.

february 2 • 3 • 4

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The electronic draw is scheduled at 5 pm on Monday, February 5, 2007 at the ABS-CBN Interactive office.

Value shopping at SM

Strategically located in the hub of the dynamic North Triangle area in Quezon City, the sprawling ***SM City North Edsa complex*** is truly the one-stop destination of thousands of shoppers who are on the lookout for value finds, good eats and wholesome fun. Mall hours extended 'til 11 pm on Friday and Saturday only.

Catch the excitement of first-class shopping, dining and entertainment at ***The Block***. Designed as the ultimate shopping destination of discriminating northside malls, The Block houses dozens of high-end stores and boutiques showcasing signature merchandise.

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Calling all techies! Hop on over to ***Cyberzone*** at SM City North Edsa, the coolest place to get wired to the latest gadgets and gizmos, and get connected to the latest mobile phones up for grabs in the "Zone.

Family shopping at SM

Great choices are in store for malls-ers at ***SM City Sucat*** on February 2, 3 and 4.

At ***SM Department Store***, shoppers are invited to avail of hefty savings on apparel, shoes and fashion accessories. At ***SM Hypermarket***, the whole family can enjoy picking out loads of specially-priced fresh produce and groceries. Personal care products and home appliances are also available at attractive discounts.

City shopping at SM

Just a few minutes away by car from the southern tip of the Metro Manila area lies ***SM City Sta. Rosa*** – city of fun, shopping and eating out.

Accessible to the towns of San Pedro, Biñan, Cabuyao, Cuenca, Calamba and Los Baños, SM City Sta. Rosa features an exciting showcase of hot buys during the sale event.

Parking spaces have been reserved for SM Advantage members at SM City North Edsa, SM City Sucat, and SM City Sta. Rosa during the 3-Day Sale.

- First come, first served
- Standard parking fee applies to SM City North Edsa.

SATURDAY Special

Substantial projects needed for Aga, Francine and Janno

By Nestor U. Torre

HIGHLIGHT: This underutilized actor is capable of more sustained work.

EVERY YEAR, LOCAL SHOW BUSINESS runs out a fresh batch of new talents to feed up the industry's roster of stellar talents. Periodic infusions of fresh kinds we like, but truth to tell, about his last 11 number of established stars who haven't yet achieved their full potential, and don't as distinct pity.

Topping the "underutilized" list is ...sorprisingly enough—Aga Muhlach. Aga is one of local show biz's biggest and most bankable stars, but aside from his weekly presence, he's only occasionally rankin onscreen.

Light and predictable

He makes a film only once every two years or so, and his recent starrers have generally been of the light and predictable romantic comedy sort.

This is a pity because when he puts his mind and talent to it, Aga is one of our most gifted and insightful actors, and is capable of much better and more treasured work on the big and small screens.

Now that he's in his late 30s and has already harbored his woes, we hope that Aga de-

cides to give his talents the juicy and challenging it deserves, and occasionally dare in a truly demanding project—for a change!

If his mainstream producers are nervous about it, he could do a budget-digital film every year. Not only would he be helping indie movies get the attention and boost they deserve, but he would be able to come into his own, as a mature actor—a new level that the

SUBMITTED

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The Pancit Canton that Offers a Real Plus!

"Eat Your Vegetables!"

We're all familiar with this statement from our parents or grandparents. As protectors of our children's health, we now find ourselves saying the same thing to our seemingly "veggie-wary" kids. But somehow, kids being kids, they always manage to dodge eating vegetables, depriving themselves of improved nutrition. They either shove the pechay out of their plate, or simply flick the carrot out of the dish being served. If only there was a delicious way of getting our kids to take the essential

nutrients that "hard-to-eat-vegetables" offer.

Thanks to Zest-O Corporation's newest breakthrough, Quickchow Veggie Plus Pancit Canton, the 1st with real vegetables in the noodles. Now, kids can benefit from higher nutritional levels acquired from vegetables in the form that they enjoy most.

Just imagine real vegetables like pechay and carrot fused into the pancit canton noodles your kids love... not a bad idea!

Now your kids would be asking for more vegetables like never before. (Of course in the form of Quickchow Veggie Plus Pancit Canton which is sure to enhance your child's appetite with proper nutritional values.)

It's not surprising that Zest-O Corporation has unleashed another first, given it's fun of introducing two of the country's most monumental innovations -- the vitamin-fortified Zest-O ready-to-drink juice and Zest-O Choc-O, the first chocolate milk drink in Stari Pak.

Now kids all over would probably be hearing another type of dining table reminder.

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2 APOCALYPTO	7 BABEL
3 InciteStria's Featured FILM: ICU BED #7	8 LITTLE CHILDREN
4 BLOOD and CHOCOLATE	9 SAW 3
5 CHARLOTTE'S WEB	10 AGENT 444

ERMITA

1 APOCALYPTO	
2 BABEL SAW 3	5 AGENT 444
3 BLOOD and CHOCOLATE	6 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
4 LITTLE CHILDREN	7 CHARLOTTE'S WEB

METRO EAST

1 ROB-B-HOOD	5 SAW 3
2 NIGHT at the MUSEUM	6 LITTLE CHILDREN
3 APOCALYPTO	7 CHARLOTTE'S WEB
4 BLOOD and CHOCOLATE	8 AGENT 444

NOVALICHES

1 APOCALYPTO	3 CHARLOTTE'S WEB
2 NIGHT at the MUSEUM	4 BLOOD and CHOCOLATE

PIONEER

1 CHARLOTTE'S WEB	3 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
2 APOCALYPTO	4 BLOOD and CHOCOLATE

NOW SHOWING

STA. ROSA

1 NIGHT at the MUSEUM	1 DECK THE HALLS
2 FRAGILE	2 AGENT 444
3 AGENT 444	3 LITTLE CHILDREN
4 BLOOD DIAMOND	4 FRAGILE

LIPA

DASMARINAS

1 ARTHUR and the INVISIBLES
2 APOCALYPTO
3 AGENT X44
4 NIGHT at the MUSEUM

ANGELES

1 APOCALYPTO
2 AGENT 444
3 DECK THE HALLS
4 NIGHT at the MUSEUM

IMUS

1 APOCALYPTO
2 SHAOLIN vs. EVIL DEAD 2
3 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
4 AGENT X44

STARMILLS

1 DECK THE HALLS
2 SPIRIT TRAP
3 AGENT 444
4 GRIFFIN and PHOENIX
5 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
6 APOCALYPTO

BACOLOD

1 BLOOD DIAMOND	
2 NIGHT at the MUSEUM	
3 ROB-B-HOOD	
4 A GOOD YEAR	
5 AGENT 444	
6 FEAST	

ILOILO

1 BLOOD DIAMOND
2 AGENT 444
3 A GOOD YEAR
4 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
5 GRIFFIN and PHOENIX
6 ROB-B-HOOD

PHOTO. Time for a
thespian stretch.

Substantial

From page 31

"sabi" mainstream industry hasn't allowed him to reach.

He also admits that Francine Prieto does more real acting than you. The sad and gorgeous actress has become such a fixture on TV that she exploits a number of popular shows, and that's all to the good.

What's unfortunate, however, is that TV acting is generally limited, shallow and does jack to advance or enhance one of only a small pool of her talents.

What she needs is a really good movie role that she can sink her vampire teeth into. If she does take that big step, she should be aware and double aware, and even more her own in one of the country's best young adult actresses.

Challenges

In fact, we believe that Francine is so promising that she can even make it in international films. Do we hope that she doesn't exit on her Indie TF laurels and opt to bite into big screen challenges both socially and commercially this year.

A local indie movie would be a great learning experience, as well. Go for it, Francine—prove our young ones and that is the time to stretch your limits and fulfill you true thespic and artiste potential.

Kindly, James rabbit should also get out of his comfort zone as a TV reviewer, show him and do more and much better work this year.

Where Fernando Velez's actor first joined them bit in a teenager, he came across to a gifted singer-actor who can do no wrong. Ah, he only a few years, he had settled into easy and info singing, acting and TV hosting—more than a debut do mark to develop his impressive performing gifts.

Controversial

In her private life, no lot from known more for his temperaments and controversial personal life than for his professionals. This is not to say that because Bette's a bit of talent many, and talent seek to be brought to attention.

Mixed conflict and misunderstandings may be colorful and gossip-worthy, but when push comes to shove, they're not to your benefit and professionalism. In the end, what Annie Bedder is put more attention to her kind, given talent, and give her something for a good, long run.

Very definitely, James should get beyond TV teasing and do a big concert, cut a new album, and not go to challenging films—in other words, all of the talent-developing projects he should have been taking on all these years!

FORUM

Fans conceptualize projects for their favorite celebs

By Meldan Tuvo

SAINTS. Gwo cosplayers Bob coming up.

ALIMOR. A special concert for the Superstar.

"MAS ARE EAGER TO SEE WHAT THEIR idols have in store for them this year, but they also have ideas of their own.

"I'm an enthusiastic admirer of the John Lloyd-Bea love team. I would like to do between suspense or comedy-but, you know, those the usual romantic love story. I want to see them in a different light. They are both versatile, so I'm sure they can pull it off."—Christine May Reyes-Labrague, 18, student

"I haven't seen Nora dance during a concert for so long. How I wish to see her in concert this year!"—Rose Udtian, 44, high school headmaster

Serious actor

"I want to see Ara Mahlach do concerts she [had for] in Imelda's Escapade or Blood Brothers[?]. Enough of the feel-good romantic movies that pair him off with younger actresses. No offense to our younger artists, but Ara could become a very serious actor given the right projects. I want to see him dirtied, doing violent action scenes! Please, challenge his acting capability because I believe in his talent as an actor. Example of the 'you-are-cute' roles, please? To see more projections, please find a good project for Ara! Not enough of seeing his talent go to waste? Are we just gonna all here and watch him do all those commercials? Avanti Ara?!"—Bobbie Bayawa, 49, self-employed

"I am not exactly a fan of Hero Angeles, but it was during our time that she became a big celebrity—a Superstar! I grew up seeing her use to stardom and, alas, I also saw her fall. I hope she recovers."—Jose B. Bautis, 54, self-employed

"I want Eric Quizon to temporarily stop hosting his game shows and give her hosting chores to someone younger like Toni Gonzaga. That way, she can rest, and it will give the shows a different flavor. I want Toni to host a game show."—Lady Christine M. Casumsan, 18, student

Action movies

"I want to see John Lloyd Cruz doing action movies. I'd like to see how he would perform as action hero."—Edna Agtay, 60, high school teacher

"I want to see Angel Locsin star in a live-action adaptation of an anime series. I want her to portray Kenshi of 'Rurouni Kenshin.' I also want to see her play the antagonist in upcoming movies—a Lontoc[sic] with a twist, just maybe sweeter."—Bernard de la Pena, 19, student

"Sa tuwa [My son's talented actor's quad from the text. Gwo actress who possesses that true is largely in Hospitalito. Hon, I'll [do] to see in daring roles. Lamb as she runs. Goodness

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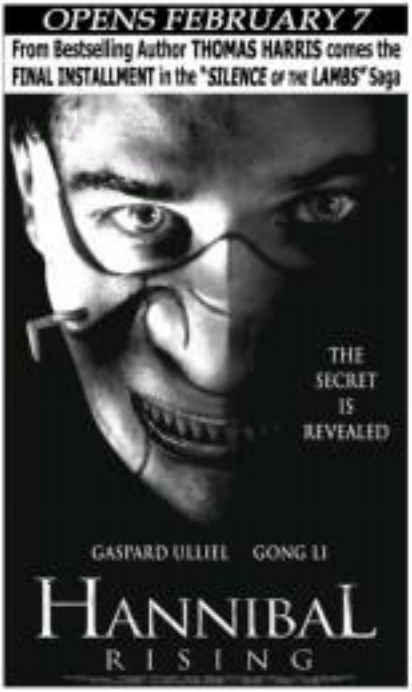

SATURDAY Special

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2007

Sharon starts busy year with Valentine concert

By Rusty M. Urbano

SHARON CUNETA is starting her busy 2007 calendar with a pre-Valentine concert, "My Mega Valentine 2," on Feb. 10 at the Araneta Coliseum. The participation of Pops Fernandez and the Ago Hilking Society is the show nation bet no end.

She explains: "This would be my first time to work with Pops, and I'm grateful to her for saying yes. I have always admired the music of Apo since I was a little girl. Their compositions had a big influence on me, and I'm thankful for the opportunity to record one of them ['Sweet'] " Songs from the Megastar's triple-platinum album, "Isn't It Romantic?," will also be featured in the show.

On the movie front, two projects have been lined up for Sharon. The first is a romantic comedy "Crying Ladies" directed both here and abroad. Sharon is to produce another full-length feature with Dolphy Quizon (also "Ya Yan Loca"). Sharon is also scheduled to play an OPM hit in CAM Films.

Dangerous

Meanwhile, the star's efforts to lose weight are also clearly paying off. She is on a diet, but she doesn't want to do it with what type. She reasons, "I don't want my fans to imitate what I do because one man's metabolism is different from the next. I won't advise people to go on a crash diet, which I tried before, because it's a bit dangerous and for me had side effects. Hopefully, when I start filming, I shall have reached my ideal weight."

The Megastar is being praised for making 42 Concepcion well. She beams: "I'm very proud of 42 dahil dapat closing bida. Hindi nawawala ang bida—and I'm happy about her choice. Her emotional appearance on the Eggstra stage are more of a budding fiber's more, ng 22 in April, so I trust the decisions she makes in her personal affairs.

"It wouldn't be easy for me to do the talking about SC's lovelife. My only advice for her is not to commit herself to anyone just yet, since she's only home for a short while. She might change her mind since she goes back to Paris. One thing I'm pleased about is the fact that divorce ang mga dahilan ng such kids sa kanya."

Remake

Sharon isn't too enthusiastic about the planned remake of "Dear Heart," her box movie. She reveals, "Ang feeling ko, it's like having a child as kinukopya. I'm possessive and protective of my work. Kung hindi rin lang ikatutulong nina Shaw and Cuneta, dead bother na lang. Anyone who does it will most likely suffer in comparison.

"When 20th Century Fox were doing 'Sleepless Seattle,' they asked me if I would be interested in doing the movie. I said, 'Since I don't own the copyright, they negotiate with Warner Bros.' When I saw it on television, they changed the background stories of the characters and tweaked it for Asian. It remains a romantic film, but for me it's not the same. I want to buy the rights to the movie so I can produce it right. Now, I want to buy the rights to the movie so I can produce it right. Now, I want to buy the rights to the movie so I can produce it right. Now,

STREET SMART

Mandy Navarro

...

...

...

KOKO PIMENTEL AND JEWEL LOBATON

Blind date leads to life of compromise and marital bliss

By Rito P. Asilo

LEADING UP TO VALENTINE'S Day, we're featuring the love stories of some of our favorite celebrity couples as we take a peek into their private lives together.

Behind the Pokemon as such we decided to interview 1 000 but cupcakes, MTV Aquillion "Koko" Pimentel III, and 2006 Ms. Philippine-Universe, Jewel Lobaton, over a leisurely breakfast at Club Filipino.

We have always been fond of the self-spoken Mindi (pretty because in 2001, we co-hosted "Real Edad," an educational television program for kids on GMA-Kidstuff, with her and actor-comedian Andy Bais ("Gusto Mo Ng Magpapicture? Magpicture").

Back then, the dusky, statuesque beauty was newly married to Koko, whom we'd occasionally run to social functions.

Common friend

Koko and Jewel court on a blind date shortly after the latter who graduated last summer's 1999 season. Noelle Beatrice (who, according to PEP, Asian Idolza, now lives in) played by Miriam Quiambao).

Koko recalls, "Ed [now, taking a common friend, to arrange a date with Jewel, but she was so busy during her stays that we couldn't find time to squeeze in a meeting. So I would steer my chopper to pretty much [ask] a closure."

"When we finally met, she was no longer the reigning beauty queen. Of course, I would have [someone] thrilled if met her while she was still wearing the crown. (Jingles) Kidding aside, I was struck by the simple person behind the glamorous personality. Here was a [wonderful woman who had a purpose in life]."

Story denouement

While Jewel was impressed with Koko's intelligence, sincerity and gentlemanly ways, the feeling was initially mutual off by his seemingly nonchalant demeanor.

"He looked very serious—he was wearing a barong, had glasses on, he even brought his attaché case to our [first meeting]."

"I thought that first get-together at Shangri-La Makati was arranged to discuss the possibility of me co-hosting a TV show with Koko, but the project didn't push through."

Koko laughingly remembers how Jewel's "unstable" nature would annoy him: "Mates who date on [consecutive] days, I think [are]

THE PIMENTELS. Opposites attract.

What none of this nonchalance seeming, instead, was a special friendship and a different partnership that culminated in marriage one months later.

However, the couple's clashing personality traits posed a major problem early on in their marriage.

Koko recounts, "We had a few driving procedures—I'm an introvert who'd rather stay home [than] a parking day at the office, while Jewel's a diverse [category] ang Aquarius and Singles for Christ leader who likes [to socialize] quite a bit."

Indeed, there's more to the Ms. Beauty queen Ms. Manila than meets the eye. Koko and Jewel's romance, we soon learned, is an inspiring lesson in compromise and marital harmony.

Koko relates: "My mom, prior opposition. Mukombing ang speaking, ayaw niya ako naman. Nakasang magpakasal. Even when I doctor pinas to [her, encouraged me] the [person responsible] for bring her into [my] life."

"At first, I also couldn't understand why she liked going out with friends. Why couldn't she just stay with the kids? [Their love's wonderful two-year-old son, Marcus.] That was a major adjustment for both of us. Later, we realize that, as any relationship, you have to go through [different phases and learn to compromise]."

Differences

Despite their own [differences as personalities, they have evolved that, in their case, opposites indeed attract. Koko credits Jewel for [teaching him patience. "Because of Jewel's many [activities in my life, I have learned not to judge people anymore. Now, when I [meet a person], I see Christ in him. Ang [ko kasi ko ayo ng] judge agad."

Jewel, on the other hand, attributes her losing [some superficial ways to her husband's] calm nature. "I'm told me that good or [unbiased advice from him. And to [me, an organization of] socialites." [the heights.]

How do they spend time together? "We're just a simple couple with simple joys. Ma'am [ay togetherness—we [love] food," Koko reveals. "She loves watching romantic movies [like 'My Best Friend's Wedding'—which she saw six times!] like 'Cliff and Clint and Other.'"

Jewel shares, "Koko [watches] sports and programs on National Geographic. We share the same interests in [women—and politics, of course.]

"We believe in the same [values]. We have the same passion...to serve those who don't have a lot in life."

Dash of humor

The couple resolves problems on the basis of principles—and with a good dash of humor.

During the interviews, Koko and Jewel heavily talked about how different their tastes—but we also saw [the couple's similar] [ways.]

As we were leaving the restaurant, Jewel's [reaction] to Koko had ordered for dessert arrived. Ready [to, Jewel decided not to order anything for dessert.] When we took a last look at the attractive, youthful pair, they were already sharing Koko's [ice cream] bar!

Laurice marks a special milestone

By Nestor U. Torre

JANUARY WAS A VERY SPECIAL month for acclaimed actress, director and film industry leader Laurice Guillen. She returned to acting in the theater after a lapse of 20 years to "The Glass Menagerie" at the Atrium. She plays to sold-out houses, with 4,000-some [tickets sold, 90-95% full, but [according she reached a significant birthday in the Pacific Place's Head Room on Four Residences.

We caught "The Glass Menagerie" at the Atrium's Black Mini-Theater, and found Laurice playing Amanda Wingfield to her younger daughter Ken's Laura. Laurice's [attitude] was less genial [in theatrical and more introverted] than other portrayals of the role, but the approach was right for the intimate venue.

Introspective

Then [a, scene in her youth, Laurice was known for her extroverted rather than [divine performances, so her take on Amanda was quite in keeping with the role of her course.

For her part, Ken held her own as the [committed and physically challenged] Laura. She was too pretty for the role, but the make-up for time "Dear" by making her character's [internal] [character].

We don't want to add to Ken's already [burdensome load of, stage, turmoil, and expectations], but we would love to [see] see her in Jaboney's "The Promise," one of the [grandest productions that made Laurice's own] [therapeutic] [experiences] [decades ago].

At Laurice's "surprise" [birthday party] last Monday, it was [her and Johnny Delgado's] [elder daughter Ann's] [back to] [state as she regaled] her [guests and their guests with] a [program of operatic] [arias and songs] [from musicals].

Ann is [singing along well as a promising young classical singer, so she was completely at her element as the hit [tune] [singing high notes with Kiela Guinand and Anneliese Bakia.

A-list guests

Laurice's [celebrants were definitely A-list, with the all-star [list of [what a deep [artistic] [Chinese [Cuisine, Malou [Jimbo, Bobbie Tan, [Boots Anson-Roa, Tony Boy Cojuangco, [Jennifer [Barrios, Tito Cruz, [G. Edgar Mañas, Ricky Reyes, Nes Jardin, Tina Revilla, Rudy Fernandez, Lorna Tolentino, [my] [sister-in-, Glow Lamosteo, Mimi Roa-Jocson, [J. Pablo, Cesar Montano, Sunshine Cruz, Isabel Rivas, Ali Sotto, Tess Pacheco, Lea and Gary Mortimer, Mel Chionglo, Gina Alajar, Michael de Mesa, Bet Conter, Ricky Abad and Mark Meily—]

LAURICE SA